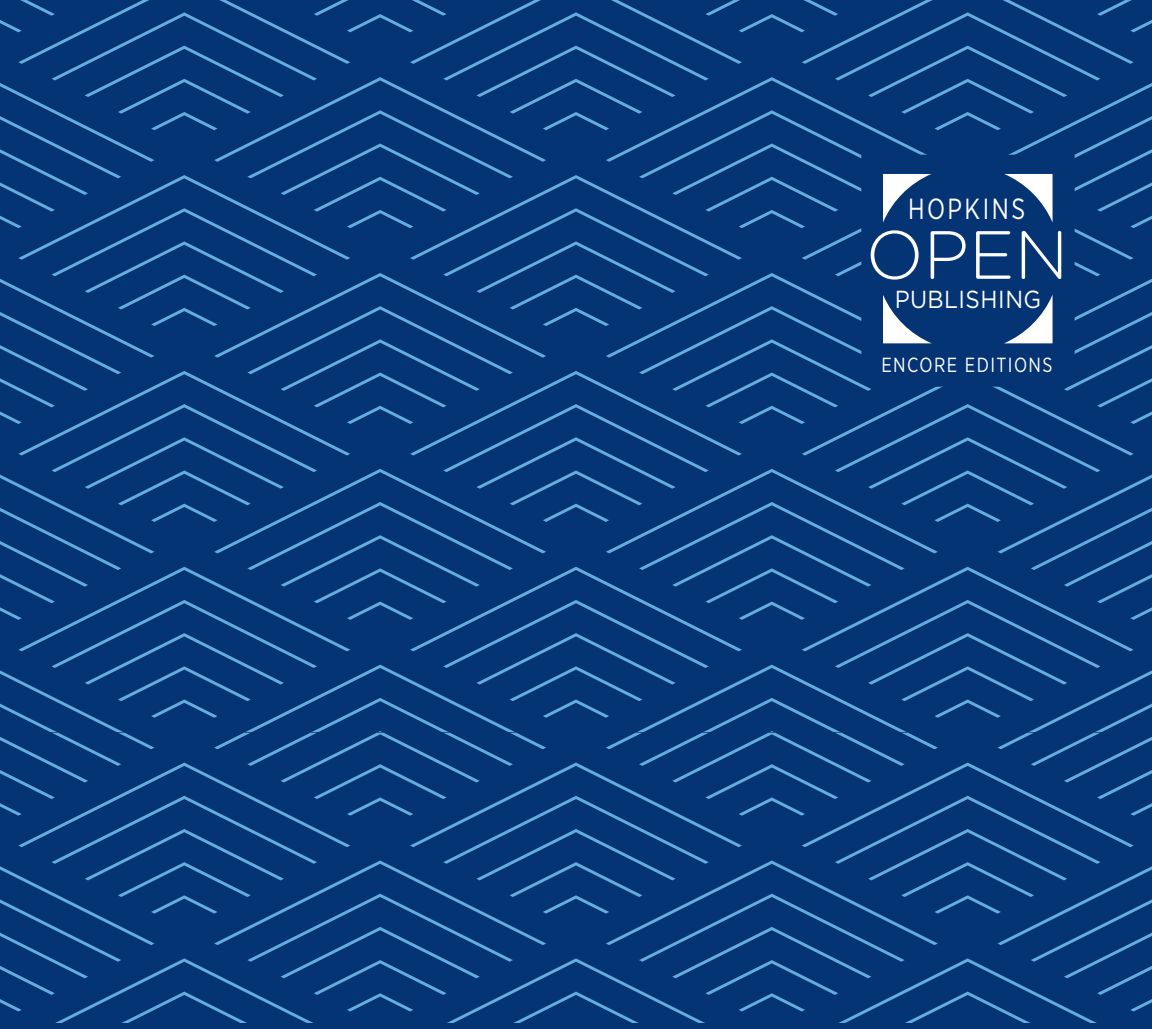


*Marvin B. Becker*

# Florence in Transition

## Volume One: *The Decline of the Commune*

VISIT…

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# FLORENCE IN TRANSITION

## VOLUME ONE: THE DECLINE OF THE COMMUNE

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VOLUME ONE: THE DECLINE OF THE COMMUNE

MARVIN B. BECKER

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*To Betty*

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Marvin B. Becker
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# FLORENCE IN TRANSITION

## VOLUME ONE: THE DECLINE OF THE COMMUNE

# INTRODUCTION

This inquiry begins with a discussion of Florentine paideia in the late Middle Ages. The use of the term "paideia" owes much to the writings of Werner Jaeger, especially his first volume, *Paideia: The Ideals of Greek Culture* (New York, 1945). Although the term cannot be translated literally or even very meaningfully by a single English equivalent, I have used it to mean a consciously pursued ideal, not an anthropological concept. Thus paideia encompasses the personal and collective goals of education, including therefore the ideals of the society. It is also employed to suggest the relationship between these aspirations and ideals on the one hand and political styles of ruling and being ruled on the other.

In the text I have used such expressions as "casual paideia" and "gentle paideia" to indicate the easy-going laissez-faire rule of a secure urban patriciate, as well as to describe the hortatory, admonitory quality pervading much of the literature and art of the communal polis until the early 1340's. The era was characterized by the confidence or at least the hope that men could be persuaded by example and rhetoric to follow the dictates of reason in their quest for the highest good. It was through appeals to the better nature of the patrician citizen and not by coercion of law that justice was to prevail. Only in time of crisis would the consistent implementation of legal norms be championed. The most frequent problem for the political man of the early *trecento* was how to minimize citizen sacrifice and leave personal, ecclesiastical, and corporate immunities and liberties intact.

By contrast, "stern paideia" saw the polis exercising tight controls over the countryside during the late *trecento* so that additional revenues might be extracted. In the early 1380's "extraordinary" imposts were levied on rural property which very soon became a regular feature of the Florentine tributary system. Tax rates that in the early *trecento* averaged

only ten soldi per lira now doubled and tripled, while the communal intake even quadrupled. What had been a light burden was well on the way to becoming a rugged, persistent program. Originally such imposts had accounted for only about 10 per cent of the communal intake, but by the early fifteenth century the figure veered between 40 and 50 per cent of total tax revenue.[1] Comparable patterns of rigor can be discerned in the rule of subject cities and allied territories, where communal policy was dictated increasingly by budgetary deficits and the pressing need to underwrite the inflated credit structure. Within only a few years taxes in these areas doubled.

Persistent and expanding costs of warfare as well as the inordinate pressure of trying to meet escalating carrying charges on a burgeoning public debt had a relentless effect upon the style of politics and the tone of public life. In the first decade and a half of the fourteenth century, when the income of the republic was about 300,000 florins, the public debt (*Monte*) was between 47,500 and 50,000 florins. Carrying charges were a few thousand florins. By the late fourteenth century the public debt stood at 3,000,000 florins, and carrying charges approached 200,000 florins; the treasury was in arrears some 300,000 florins a year. Thus in addition to warfare, the maintenance of citizen confidence in the fiscal reliability of the polis was a monumental problem for Florentine rulers. Moreover, during these years the increase in forced citizen loans (*prestanze*) was staggering. The annual figure sometimes exceeded 1,000,000 florins. Such an assumption of fiscal liability on the part of the government was revolutionary and awesome.

The problem of finding fiscal support for this inflated credit structure compelled those in power not to overlook any potential source of revenue. That their quest met with some degree of success is attested to by the fact that the value of shares in the public debt did not decline appreciably between the 1380's and the 1430's.

This search for revenue led to the integration of Florentine territory, the rise of empire, and a strenuous program of mercantilism. Yet growth of the public debt and large-scale warfare did much permanently to destroy the gentle regime. Nor were these the only forces undermining the rule and hopeful culture of late thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Florence. The reactions of an entrenched patriciate as well as the emergence of the "new citizens" also was to weaken the easy rule.

[1] Cf. M. Becker, "Changing Patterns of Florentine Public Finance in the Late Fourteenth and Early Fifteenth Centuries." To be published in the *Archivio Storico Italiano*.

The patriciate was composed of affluent commoners, members of the elite of the city's great guilds (*popolani grassi*), and magnates. The term "magnate" first appeared in a public document of 1281 and designated a specific category of citizens required by law to post security for their good behavior.[2] This cautionary measure came as a result of a general pacification of the city bravely initiated by the Pope's representative, Cardinal Latino. In 1280 His Holiness was vitally interested in establishing concord among the feuding factions and contending orders in Florence. Rome stood much in need of Florentine support if the papacy was to realize its grand north Italian political objectives, and as long as the pontiff's great Guelf ally was torn by internecine strife, Florence would be less than useful to him. The need for public order and the concern for the good of the commonwealth rather than for private interests were not only persistent themes of such great preachers as Cardinal Latino but lay also at the heart of the thirteenth-century classical revival; indeed it is entirely fitting that Cicero's and Aristotle's political teachings should have been incorporated into the civic humanism of the medieval commune. The message prompting men to maintain a well-ordered state peopled with a law-abiding citizenry was also proclaimed by communal artists whose frescoes praising "buon governo" were soon to adorn the walls of the many town halls of Tuscany.

The legislation of 1281 differed markedly from its medieval predecessors in two respects. First, it required a magnate to post a money bond to be confiscated in case of a serious breach of the law instead of waiting for a crime to be committed before assessing the penalty. Second, it required a certain segment of the citizenry to take an oath of peace instead of the traditional medieval device of calling upon men to exchange the kiss of peace in the Cathedral. Cardinal Latino's program was directed towards the pacification of long-standing and fierce quarrels, especially among the *grandi* and *possenti* of such aristocratic families as the Adimari, Donati, Pazzi, and Tosinghi. It was these clans from the highest echelons of the patriciate whose lawless behavior the Cardinal and the commune were

[2] N. Rubinstein, "La prima legge sul sodamento," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* LXXXXIII (1935), 161–72. As a recent study has indicated, it is difficult to keep a legal and political category separate from the social concept of *nobilitas;* the two are often confused in the documents. In speaking about Padua, J. Hyde states that "the overmighty subjects of the Paduan commune are described as *magnates, potentiores* or *male ablati.* Generally, these were defined as powerful men who were not members of the political organisation of the *popolo,* but occasionally the statutes are more precise and list by name the persons falling within their scope." For other materials germane to the Florentine experience, see his *Padua in the Age of Dante* (New York: 1966), pp. 57–90.

determined to check. The persistence of "broils, discords," and even "great wars" among these *consorterie* encouraged the chief magistracy of the republic to designate as magnates the feuding families of the Adimari, Bardi, Buondelmonti, Bostichi, Cavalcanti, Donati, Foraboschi, Frescobaldi, Gherardini, Giandonati, Malespini, Manieri, Mozzi, Pazzi, Rossi, Tornaquinci, Tosinghi, and Visdomini. "Guerre et scandala" perpetrated by these magnates are to be a recurring motif in the annals of the city, and the aforementioned families were singled out by the Florentine chroniclers as most prone to respond to the vendetta. Although the contentions of a Giovanni Villani or a Dino Compagni cannot be accepted uncritically, the fact remains that only one of the long list of fierce and lawless families mentioned in their chronicles was to escape the harsh restraints imposed by the Ordinances of Justice in late 1293. Perhaps that family—the Falconieri, whose proclivity for the blood feud was as pronounced as any clan in Florence—evaded its rigors because they had supported Giano della Bella, who led the popular revolution that year. Thus the term "magnate" came to be applied to many of the city's leading families who between 1281 and 1293 chronically practiced the time-honored and customary act of private vengeance. When the Ordinances of Justice were drawn up and amended, between 1293 and 1295, it would seem that those clans legally designated as magnate were those most susceptible to the blandishments of violence.

Later, when a great banking family such as the Bardi was classified as magnate, it differed not at all socioeconomically from its high-born, affluent peers the Acciaiuoli or the Peruzzi. Yet distinctions did exist. Although they did exercise much political power, magnate clans were formally barred from the honor of sitting in the priorate or its two advisory colleges (the Twelve and the Gonfalonieri). More disquieting to the magnates was their extended liability for the crimes of too numerous kinsmen. Recent scholarship has arrived at the conclusion that since certain magnates had interests in common with *popolani grassi,* class distinctions were meaningless.[3] It presumes that a rationally organized

[3] Marc Bloch's treatment of the French nobility suggests that this cadre was being transformed into a legal class during the later Middle Ages. We find "what had long been by mere convention a hereditary vocation" being changed "into a legalized and jealously-guarded privilege. . . ." Cf. *Feudal Society,* trans. L. Manyon (Chicago: 1961), I, 322. According to Bloch it became increasingly difficult to pass into the ranks of the French nobility after the twelfth century. Moreover, there was a marked tendency to associate the term "nobility" with the exercise of specific juridical prerogatives. For an assessment of recent literature on this theme, see Georges Duby, "Une enquête à poursuivre: la noblesse dans la France," *Revue Historique,* CCXXVI (1961), 1–22. The north

and highly efficient society existed which in turn produced an integrated culture where men were guided in critical matters by reason rather than emotion. But the facts of *trecento* experience belie such an oversimplified hypothesis: despite the high degree of economic and social cooperation between magnates and *popolani,* violence and discord were endemic to the former. It was easier for oligarchs to agree upon matters of economic policy than upon renunciation of the vendetta by a particular magnate clan or the desirability of compelling warring *consorterie* to exchange the kiss of peace and post sizable security.

Although no study of the patrimonies of the Florentine elite will disclose significant differences between the magnates and the affluent commoners, other distinctions did exist. The Bardi and Frescobaldi were considered magnates because they were required by law to post security for their continued good behavior. To the juridical mentality of the *trecento,* status at law was a mode of demarcation and a source of identity. Repeatedly chroniclers insisted that Florence was divided into three classes: magnates, *popolani grassi,* and *il popolo minuto.* Identity depended upon membership in certain legally constructed orders. For example, legal personality was bestowed only on guildsmen who were matriculated in a specific corporation juridically accredited by the commune. It is no more necessary to mention the legal distinctions between master, apprentice, and journeyman than to enumerate the gradations between the orders of clergy. Law was a psychological category, and a scrupulous regard for legality pervaded the political milieu. When *il popolo minuto* wished to change their status, they petitioned the signory for the right to found a new legal order, the artisan corporation.

Thus magnates were not a socioeconomic class but rather a juridical cadre, and this classification had an absolute relevance in the eyes of their contemporaries. The patriciate was divided juridically, and no amount of

---

Italian situation was not comparable, since there had been extensive interpenetration between noble and commoner and many new clans had risen to the top echelons of communal society. Social mobility was pronounced and economic distinctions tended to blur from the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries. Cf. G. Luzzatto, *Studi di storia economica veneziana* (Padua: 1954), pp. 125–65; E. Christiani, *Nobiltà e popolo nel comune di Pisa* (Naples: 1962), pp. 129–34. To argue, however, that because of this socioeconomic interpretation the north Italian urban patriciate achieved homogeneity would be fallacious. See Jacques Heers's incisive discussion of "Le divorce entre les deux aristocraties est très net," in *Gênes au XV^e siècle* (Paris: 1961), pp. 511–62; M. Rabozzi, "Lotte in Novara fra antica e nobilità," *Bollettino Storica per la provincia di Novara,* I, (1948), 5–20. No study comparable to that of Heers's exists for Florence. Cf. E. Fiumi, "Fioritura e decadenza del' economia fiorentina," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* CXVI (1958), 443–509.

socioeconomic cohesion should cause us to overlook this fact. Modern scholarship that tends to neglect this penchant for legality, so deeply imbedded in the Florentine mentality, presents a rational view of social change and human motivation based upon a compatibility of economic interests. Such a description cannot account for the persistence of anti-social behavior among magnates or their political antagonism. Mutual suspicion and distrust between magnates and *popolani* were much in evidence in 1340. The Bardi and Frescobaldi appealed to their fellow magnates to avenge insults, real or imagined, and to overthrow the signory who enforced the Ordinances. The chroniclers of Florence, *popolani* all, saw the lawless magnates bent upon destroying the political order of the city. They came to believe that these nobles were seized with an inordinate ambition to dominate public life. If their opinions were oversimplifications of complex interaction between the two top echelons of Florentine society, they should nevertheless not be discounted, since their convictions bore influence. Yet these selfsame chroniclers believed that the best qualities of *popolani* and magnates could be harmoniously combined and that even the most lawless magnates might be won over to the side of the polis through an education in civic concern and awareness rather than through coercion and punishment. Indeed, it was just this hopeful expectation that was at the base of the communal paideia in late medieval Florence.

# MANUSCRIPT SOURCES IN THE ARCHIVO DI STATO, FLORENCE

For an ample and exacting description of documents housed in the Florentine archives covering exactly the years from the beginning of the Republic until the Black Death in 1348, see the seldom-cited volume of B. Barbadoro, *Le Fonti della più antica legislazione Florentina* (Bologna, 1934).

For several of the sources abbreviations are given.

*Archivio Notarile*
*Atti del Capitano*
*Atti del Esecutore*
*Atti del Podestà*
*Balia*
*Camera del Comune, Entrata (CCE)*
*Capitoli*
*Capitoli Protocoli (CapP)*
*Consulte e Pratiche (CP)*
*Diplomatico*
*Estimo*
*Giudice degli Appelli (GA)*
*Lana*
*Legnaioli*
*Libri Fabarum (LF)*
*Mercanzia*
*Missive*
*Monte*
*Prestanze*
*Provvisioni (P)*
*Provvisioni Duplicati (PD)*
*Scrivano*
*Seta*
*Sindicato del Podestà*
*Statuti*
*Uffiziali di Grascia*

# THE COMMUNAL PAIDEIA AND THE EMERGING HUMANISM OF THE EARLY *TRECENTO*

# I

The social and political organization of Florence in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was communal and essentially an outgrowth of the ferment and struggle of the late Middle Ages. Created by medieval man, it represented an exciting adaptation to a changed environment. The methods of dealing with legal and extralegal questions had their roots in Italian feudalism, the new law schools, the divergent theologies, mystical expectation, chivalric codes, the expanding field of public administration, and the business practices of that age.[1]

During the earliest part of the era, politics was infused with religious sentiment. A sacramental tie was considered to exist between the city-state and God's cosmos. The polis was spoken of reverentially as the "mystic body of Christ" while in otherwise mundane documents the communal treasury was referred to as "Christus Fiscus."[2] Later in the century,

[1] Works on these topics are legion; for an excellent bibliography see A. Sapori, *Le marchand italien au moyen âge* (Paris: 1952). At the outset it should be understood that communal political forms possessed great vitality, with oligarchies, despotisms, and popular regimes each making striking adaptations to them. Cf. A. Anzilotti, *Movimenti e contrasti per l'unità italiana* (Bari: 1930), pp. 1–31. For additional bibliography see A. Sapori, *Studi di storia economica (secoli XIII–XIV–XV)* (3rd ed.; Florence: 1956), II, 1115–86.

[2] E. Kantorowicz, "Christus-Fiscus," *Synopsis: Festgabe für Alfred Weber* (Heidelberg: 1949), pp. 225–35, and "Mysteries of State: An Absolutist Concept and its Late Medieval Origins," *The Harvard Theological Review,* XLVIII (Jan., 1955), 65–85. This "sacramental tie" lingers but is well on the way to being severed even in the generation of Dante. In public documents Christian metaphorical references to the commune no longer emphasize with such frequency the bond between polis and divine cosmos. Beginning gradually and mounting over the second half of the *trecento* is the tendency to see the *civitas* as a sacred "Ding an sich"—an entity justified in its own right, elected by God to carry on its holy mission. E. Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies* (Princeton: 1957), pp. 193–232; C. T. Davis, "An Early Florentine Political Theorist: Fra Remigio De' Girolami," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* CIV (1960), 671. (The debt this development owes to the rise of the study of Roman law is of course well known. Certainly prominent humanists were much influenced by these studies.) A leading poet of his generation, Franco Sacchetti, was to compare the glories and

chroniclers called the rulers of the republic after the apostles of the Lord, even tracing the etymology of the term "prior" to the words of Christ. Christian *caritas* was the primary civic virtue. Artists, poets, historians, scholars—even keepers of diaries and family records—looked forward with longing and hope to a Christian renewal of the individual (*renovatio*).[3] Guild statutes and communal regulations were as replete with religious metaphor as they were with Christian expectation.[4]

The period was characterized by a curious mixture of business acumen and knightly generosity. Just as the politics of the polis were suffused with Christian teaching, so, too, the new burgher ethic was infused with the refinements of the medieval chivalric code. Perhaps the most sensitive exposition of this optimistic ideal is to be found in Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*. The author believes the best of the burgher ethic can be effectively combined with the most generous ideals of the noble. It may be well to remember that the historical setting for most of his Florentine tales is the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.[5] Boccaccio was

victories of "Holy Florence" with the twelve labors of Hercules. Cf. *Il libro delle rime,* ed. A. Chiari (Bari: 1936), CXCIV, 210. By the mid-*trecento,* then, the sanctity of the polis was not due to what Kantorowicz called that "portentious equation" so commonplace in the mid-*trecento* whereby *imitatio imperii* by the church and *imitatio sacedotii* on the part of the secular authority conferred grandeur upon ruler, be he lay or ecclesiastic. Cf. his "Pro patria mori in Medieval Political Thought," *American Historical Review,* LVI (1951), 486–92. Cf. also P. Schramm, "Sacerdotium und Regnum im Austausch ihrer Vorrechte," *Studi Gregoriani,* II (1947), 403–57. Instead the commune had come to exercise authority once the exclusive preserve of the church. For example, communal courts heard cases on charges of usury, blasphemy, and even witchcraft. The jurisdiction of ecclesiastical tribunals diminished until the signory exerted sway over allegations as grave as those of heresy. What emerged might be termed "city-state theology." Perhaps it would not be altogether gratuitous to make a "pretentious equation" between this city-state theology and the civic humanism of the late *trecento.* Cf. M. Becker, "A Comment on 'Savonarola, Florence, and the Millenarian Tradition,'" *Church History,* XXVII (1958), 306–11.

[3] H. Wieruszowski, "Art and the Commune in the Time of Dante," *Speculum,* XIX (1944), 14–33; N. Rubinstein, "Political Ideas in Sienese Art," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* XXI (1958), 179–207. The chief elected magistrates of the commune were the priors, and according to Giovanni Villani the term "prior" was taken from the passage in the Holy Gospel where Christ says to His disciples: "Vos estis priores." Cf. *Cronica,* ed. F. Dragomanni (Florence: 1845), VII, 79. For an example of the extended use of religious metaphor in important public documents of the *dugento,* see E. Christiani, *Nobiltà e popolo nel comune di Pisa* (Naples: 1962), pp. 500 ff.

[4] R. de Roover, "The Concept of Just Price: Theory and Economic Policy," *Journal of Economic History,* XVIII (1958), 418–34; A. Sapori, *Compagnie e mercanti di Firenze antia* (Florence: 1957), *passim; idem, Le marchand italien,* XVII–XXI.

[5] V. Branca, *Boccaccio Medievale* (Florence: 1956), pp. 18 ff. This is the most compelling study of the *Decameron* to appear in this century, and it is the author's thesis that the most artistic of all Boccaccio's writings is grounded in the easy confidence of Florence at the turn of the *dugento.* Georg Weise maintains that the selfsame optimism charac-

inordinately proud of the bravery and daring of many Florentine merchants, but he was prouder still of those guildsmen who also manifested the liberality and generosity of behavior taught by the chivalric code.

Indeed, the ideals of chivalry, so much a part of the communal paideia, were interiorized by the great guildsmen of the early *trecento* who did in fact govern the Florentine republic of the late Middle Ages. They did not consider the magnates their enemies, but rather sought frequently to imitate them, counting aristocrats among their most cherished leaders and sagacious advisers. Intermarriage between high-born commoner and aristocrat had become a commonplace. By the end of the thirteenth century, *status nobilis* had lost much of its original meaning. Clans that differed little in patrimony, occupation, or style of life were designated commoner or magnate depending upon immediate historical circumstances.[6] Joint business ventures, partnerships in tower societies, common membership in religious confraternities or the city's great guilds, were but a few of the evidences of the fusion and confusion of these two most eminent strata of communal society. The town patriciate had blended as a consequence of everyday loyalties forged from commonplace daily experience.

Patrician urban dwellers were certainly not hostile to the medieval church. They sought reverentially, albeit sometimes a bit impatiently, to incorporate its teachings into the body of communal law, guild statutes, and everyday business practice. Moreover, they anxiously desired the advice of the great prelates. High clergy were invited to deliver political

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terizes late *dugento* and early *trecento* north Italian art. Cf. especially his illuminating study, *Die geistige Welt der Gotik und ihre Bedeutung für Italien* (Halle: 1939). For Florentine art the unrivaled study of Millard Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena After the Black Death* (Princeton: 1951), stresses the same hopeful commitment of Florentine poets and artists in the early *trecento*. This ethos characterizes even the syntax and language of the communal era with its strong confidence that seemingly antithetical notions can be contained. C. Segre, "La sintassi del periodo nei primi prosatori italiana," *Atti della Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei,* Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche, e Filologiche, IV (1952), 41 ff.

[6] Almost half the noble families cited by the thirteenth-century chronicle of Ricordano Malespini were engaged in mercantile pursuits. Cf. P. J. Jones, "Florentine Families and Florentine Diaries in the Fourteenth Century," *Papers of the British School at Rome,* XXIV (1956), 203–5. Within the confines of the territory of Florence, the vast majority of the nobility were honorific, i.e., they were magnates without fiefs. Frequently their patent of nobility was bestowed upon them by the Guelf party, the Angevin monarchy, or *il popolo*. Cf. E. Fiumi, "Fioritura e decadenza dell' economia fiorentina," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* CXV (1957), 391–94. For a discussion of some of the technicalities involved in distinguishing a magnate from a high-born commoner (a *popolano grasso*), see M. Becker, "A Study in Political Failure: The Florentine Magnates (1280–1343)," to be published in *Mediaeval Studies*.

sermons explaining the implications of an alliance or a treaty to the masses assembled in the public squares. Upon occasion they might be asked to assist in drawing up a constitution or even to guide the destinies of the polis in times of stress.[7] Thus the late-thirteenth-century patriciate were devoted sons of the church, and the overwhelming majority were dedicated to the papal cause. Animated by that explosive blend of high idealism and commercial advantage, the Florentine business community subscribed to the Guelf party, which championed allegiance to France and to Naples in addition to the Holy See. For the Florentine, European history was experienced as the product of those twin engines of medieval government, the papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. The urban chronicles organized around the reigns of popes, emperors, and kings and the great popularity of Dante's poetry and of the earlier books of Giovanni Villani's *Chronicle* attest to this fact of dual vision. Not until the early *trecento* was this medieval unity to be abandoned by Florentine analysts and historians.[8]

Nor was there lack of sympathy for the rural way of life. Indeed, city and countryside blended almost imperceptibly. Businessmen remained country proprietors at heart, harboring abiding and often romantic sympathies for the lost simplicities of rural life.[9] Their patrimonies were frequently diversified among rustic estates, city shops, and town houses.

[7] For a discussion of the political activity of Cardinal Latino in the Arno City in 1280, see N. Ottokar, *Il Comune di Firenze alla fine del dugento* (Florence: 1926), pp. 7–11. In commenting on the peace imposed by Cardinal Latino, Compagni says, ". . . [the Guelfs and the Ghibellines] wisely agreed to come to terms . . . under the yoke of the church, in order that the bonds of the agreement might be maintained by the church's power." (Translation of *The Chronicle of Dino Compagni* by E. Benecke and A. Howell [London: 1896], p. 8.)

[8] Cf. M. Apollonio's chapter is his *Uomini e forme nella cultura italiana nelle origini* (Florence: 1934), pp. 135–45, on late medieval Florentine chroniclers. For Erich Auerbach's incisive analysis of Dante's conception of history, see his *Dante als Dichter der irdischen Welt* (Berlin: 1929), pp. 108 ff. Certainly the historical failure of Pope, emperor, religious order, eroded the Christian schema so that gradually new modes of organizing the chronicle emerged. No longer will the new form be dictated by reign of emperor or coronation of Pope. What once was the occasion to begin a new book in an old chronicle—such as the coming of the emperor into Italy—became merely a passing event. Moreover, the older ideological commitments to Guelfism or Ghibellinism which imposed a certain unity upon past historical experience were also receding. Even in the generation of Dante the ordering force of these ancient passions was spending itself, although they remain dominant modes of historical perception. Two points should be borne in mind: first, while the schema begets Dante's metaphors and is central to his historical vision, he cannot accommodate the history of his own times to the Christian perspective. The overriding majority of his political contemporaries are unmoved by religious imperatives. Second, only the organization of Villani's earlier books are responsive to the medieval canons; like Dante he cannot accommodate later events to these almost sacramental norms.

[9] On the idealization of life in the countryside, see Giovanni di Pagolo Morelli, *Ricordi,* ed. V. Branca (Florence: 1956), pp. 87–101. There he renders an arcadian picture of the

Their status system was still profoundly agrarian, and therefore a substantial share of profits from trade and manufacture went back into the land. Few would have considered any career more noble than that of gentleman farmer or Tuscan noble who dedicated himself to the joys of the hunt. The affluent businessman was anxious to maintain close ties with his native country parish. Not a few enjoyed the benefits of citizenship in these native communes and parishes while residing inside the walls of the city. Only harsh laws could force Florentines to abandon the delights of country living or even forego the long summer period of repose in rural Tuscany.[10]

Thus the magnate and his affluent burgher confrere made a joint effort to manage the political intricacies of city government. The commoner sought not to unseat the noble but rather to cooperate with him. Businessman, banker, merchant, and industrialist took delight in both the fantasy and the reality of the knightly world and venerated such aristocratic organizations as the Guelf party. Pageant, ceremony, and tournament were the hallmarks of *civiltà* in Florentine society until the 1340's. With their full consent the place of honor in communal processions was accorded to high clergy as well as to magnates. The most prestigious diplomatic and judicial posts were reserved for the aristocrat. Upon numerous occasions they were granted exemption from the Draconian sumptuary ordinances of the republic so that they and their wives might bedeck themselves in splendid costumes replete with gaudy badges of status. Seldom did the burgher ethic remain immune from ideals of largesse and honor.[11] Moreover, even the less well-to-do and the parvenu, no matter how tight-fisted, were drawn to the ennobling rural life, to the chase and the pastoral ease and spontaneity. There were very few, even among the artisan shopkeeper class, who did not own at least a piece of land or a small house in the countryside (*contado*). Those who governed the city were very anxious to preserve the privileged status of rural com-

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history, manners, and customs of his natal, rural district in the Mugello. See also the *ballatette* of Franco Sacchetti in *Il Paradiso degli Alberti,* ed. A. Wesselofsky (Bologna: 1867), I, 158; *Decameron,* VI, 20.

[10] See J. Plesner, *L'émigration de la campagne à la ville libre de Florence au XIIIe siècle* (Copenhagen: 1934); P. J. Jones, *op. cit.;* E. Fiumi, *op. cit.*

[11] For a discussion of the use of the words "onore" and "onorevole" in the domestic chronicle of the lawyer Donato Velluti, see G. Brucker, *Florentine Politics and Society, 1343–1378* (Princeton: 1962), pp. 38–39. Cf. also R. de Roover, "The Story of the Alberti Company of Florence, 1302–1348, As Revealed in its Account Books," *The Business History Review,* XXXII (1958), 14–59. Cf. also such popular handbooks of good comportment as *Libro di Cato o tre volgarizzamenti del Libro di Catone* (Milan: 1829). There the author, in the person of Cato, promises to instruct the reader in the ways of living "gloriosamente e con onore."

munities. They would not conceive of exploiting or leveling rural society without extreme economic provocation. They favored and in fact pursued a tolerant, easy-going policy towards the *contado.*[12] (Such an easy, permissive regimen will be characterized in this study as the "gentle paideia.")

What emerged in Florence, then, were forms of association, a society, and an outlook that can be termed "communal." Perhaps the term can best be understood if we make the slightly forced analogy between this sociopolitical entity and a material body that has no center of gravity. Possibly we can come even closer to understanding the amorphous nature of this entity if we picture it as a loose, complex bundle of immunities, privileges, and liberties. The church, the nobility, the philopapal Guelf party, the guilds, the religious confraternities, the Court Merchant, the ecclesiastical tribunals, the courts of feudatories, the councils of parishes and rural communities—all coexisted somehow in this most pluralistic of political universes. There was no government as we understand the word today; the dominant bonds that gave cohesion to this society were those of clan or guild or religious order or vassalage or even neighborhood (if you will, the informal, personal ties of obligation)—certainly not those of state.

The political community was small and men wore their affiliations literally upon their sleeves. To speak of Florentine civic life at this time would mean depicting allegiances that we would never consider political. For example, the code of vendetta commanded kinsmen to avenge outrages against family honor, what Marc Bloch aptly termed "the most sacred of all moral obligations." So compelling were these claims that men pursued one another from beyond the grave. In a classic instance, a wealthy, influential Florentine who had been mortally wounded in a vendetta drew up a testament in favor of his avenger, should his immediate kinsmen renege on their sacred obligation. His immortal soul was set to rest only some twenty-four years later when a stranger did step forward to perform the deed and thereby collect the legacy.[13] Only a St. Francis could exorcise the demons that made justice a private matter and

[12] E. Fiumi, "Sui rapporti fra città e contado," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* CXIV (1956), 18–68. The author demonstrates how lightly taxed the *contado* was over the first decades of the *trecento.* He does not, however, pursue the problem and thus his generalizations concerning the last part of this century are unsubstantiated.

[13] M. Bloch, *Feudal Society,* trans. L. A. Manyon (Chicago: 1961), pp. 125–30. The French historian cites this telling example from R. Davidsohn's *Geschichte von Florenz* (Berlin: 1927), IV Part 3, 370, 384–85. For a discussion of the vendetta in Florence, see A. Enriques, "La vendetta nella vita nella legislazione fiorentina, *Archivio Storico Italiano,* XCI (1933), 85–146.

retribution a sacred obligation, and even he performed this miracle in the smaller, neighboring city of Arezzo rather than in turbulent Florence. Citizens of high standing seldom felt bound to obey a law unless it had been enacted with their consent or at least formulated and promulgated in their presence. Political obligation in the medieval world was no abstraction, and the forces that operated to make it effectual were often quite personal.

The eleventh century through the mid-fourteenth were prosperous years for Northern Italy, and from the matrix of this prosperity emerge the justly famous guild republics. In Florence the greater guilds came to dominate public life, and these major *arti* institutionalized a series of privileges and immunities comparable to those of the high orders in medieval society. From this preferential position they decreed themselves to be, like the clergy, tax exempt, and, like the nobility, they were to have their own law courts, rituals, festivals, hospitals, altars, churches, retainers, and even guild prisons. They employed their own police force, hired their own informers, and sponsored an effective magistracy. Perhaps the most apt description of their position might be the one so often quoted: "A government within a government, a state within a state."

## I

Constitutions and legislation provide only limited insight into the character of the rule of this guild oligarchy. Over the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, political power had been vested almost exclusively in the hands of the members of the great banking, commercial, and industrial families of Florence—the men of the *arti maggiori*. Despite the proviso that high public office should be shared with the lesser *arti*, 71 per cent of those who sat in the priorate—the supreme magistracy of the republic—from 1328 to 1342 were inscribed in only three of Florence's twenty-one legally constituted guilds. Consequently the wool guild (*Lana*), the banker's guild (*Cambio*), and the guild of the finishers of imported cloth (*Calimala*) constituted an almost absolute hegemony, and although it had commenced legally with the establishment of the first government of priors in 1282, it in fact dated back to at least the time of *II Primo Popolo* (1250–60).

These guildsmen, moreover, numbered among their matriculees only the most affluent of the populace. The bankers in the priorate owned large blocks of stock in the funded communal debt (*Monte*); their hold-

ings averaged the very substantial sum of 950 florins. The shares owned by the wool guild averaged 1,027 florins and the *Calimala* 347 florins. A guild with much less representation in the priorate, the silk guild (*Por Santa Maria*), sent members to this supreme magistracy whose holdings averaged 368 florins. Judges and notaries—professions so indispensable to communal government—composed the hard core of the earliest bureaucracy, and the shares held by these guildsmen who were selected as prior were valued at 499 florins in the funded debt.[14] When one considers that the rent for a typical Florentine shop in center city was only three or four florins a year, or that fourteen florins was considered a good annual wage for a skilled craftsman, the magnitude of these holdings becomes apparent.[15] Thus between 1328 and 1342, only a few hundred of the most prosperous citizens sat in the highest elective office in the republic—as was substantially the case with their predecessors of the late thirteenth century.

These masters of a few of the city's important guilds (*popolani grassi*) proved to be most gentle governors of the republic and almost magnanimous to their peers. Because guild matriculation had been a prerequisite for the priorate since 1282,[16] there developed a special device whereby politically ambitious Florentine patricians who plied no particular metier but were anxious to gain high elective office could achieve their ambition. These men were called "scioperati" and were permitted to matriculate in one of the major guilds solely to win full political rights. Florentine magnates were also granted a generous share of high public posts, and although they continued to suffer certain political restraints, such as not

[14] For statistics on the priorate in the *trecento,* see M. Becker, "Florentine Popular Government (1343–1348)," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* CVI (1962), 363–64. For an analysis of the composition of this magistracy between 1282 and 1292, see N. Ottokar, *op. cit.,* pp. 25–128. Ottokar's study furnishes a model and also a discussion of possible margins of error. These would run as high as 10 per cent, but this does not jeopardize the picture.

[15] For figures on rents for a typical shop favorably located in the center of the city, see A. Sapori, *Studi di storia economica medievale* (Florence: 1946), pp. 404–8. According to the celebrated Florentine statute establishing the *catasto* of 1427, the living costs for a denizen of the republic were at 14 florins a year. Cf. C. Karmin, *La legge del catasto fiorentino del 1427* (Florence: 1906), p. 27. During the 1330's the florin averaged three lire, two soldi, according to the figures set forth in the *Camera del Comune.*

[16] N. Ottokar, "Gli scioperati a Firenze nel 300," *Studi Storici in Onore di Giocchino Volpe* (Florence: 1958), pp. 705–7; also his "A proposito della presunta riforma costituzionale adottata il 6 Iuglio dell'anno 1295," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* XCI (1933), 173–79. In the second half of the fourteenth century, when Florentine politics was democratized and the influence of the urban patriciate substantially reduced, opposition to the participation of the *scioperati* in the government mounted. Cf. N. Rodolico, *I Ciompi* (Florence: 1945), pp. 181–82; A. Doren, *Studien aus der Florentiner Wirtschaftsgeschichte* (Stuttgart-Berlin: 1901–8), II, 213. This was another evidence of the reaction of late *trecento* Florentines against the casual regimen of their predecessors.

being able to enter the priorate or its advisory colleges, they were never far from the centers of power. Very rarely was a critical political decision made unless lengthy consultations had been held with the membership of the magnate order. Generally these aristocrats held from one-third to one-fourth of all sensitive communal fiscal posts. Furthermore, their influence and even primacy were felt in matters of diplomacy, where they had both the prestige and the experience to treat with the great powers of the late medieval world as equals in that cosmopolitan fraternity, the European aristocracy. Until the middle years of the fourteenth century they were also ubiquitous in the military councils of the government. Many were to assume command positions in the armies and rural militia of the polis: it was men from their ranks who provided leadership, devised strategy, and even served as captains of the mercenary troops of the republic.[17]

These *popolani grassi, scioperati,* and magnates, then, constituted the political as well as the social elite of Florence. Pride in ancestry, sometimes mythic, pride in wealth, usually real, pride in arms, and, not least, in their civic accomplishment gave this select group a confidence indispensable for ruling the polis. Sometimes this faith in self percolated over into disdain for others, not uncharacteristic of their erratic behavior as a class. It was only with the crisis and adversity of the early 1340's that this confidence, blended upon occasion with contempt, was to be undermined.[18] It is not surprising to discover, therefore, that this very self-

[17] Nobles continued to receive wages from the communal treasury until the end of Florence's second war with Pisa (1362–64). The last family to serve out a military career in the employ of the republic were the Agli in the 1360's. Among the eminent men of this cadre who filled comparable posts during the early *trecento* were the Adimari, Bardi, Bordoni, Cavalcanti, Mozzi, Spini, and Tornaquinci. Cf. *CCE,* I, fols. 2r–36; II, fols. 13r ff.; XXIV, *passim.* On the general theme of communal armies, see P. Pieri, "La fanteria in Italia nel periodo comunale," *Rivista Storica Italiana,* XI (1933), 561–614; S. Pivano, "Lineamenti storici e giuridici della cavalleria medioevale," *Atti della R. Accademia di Torino:* Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche, e Philogiche, LV (1954), 1–62.

[18] Nicolai Rubinstein speaks of the great sense of "naive optimism" in early Florentine historiography and compares it with the insecurity so evident in the contemporary Paduan chronicles. The writings of Giovanni Villani express civic pride and hopefulness until well into the 1330's. Repeatedly he contrasts the steady progress of Florence with the decline of Rome. Thus "did the daughter of Rome" surpass the mother. When the Romans request legislative assistance from the Arno city, Villani's pride knows no bounds. Cf. N. Rubinstein, "Some Ideas on Municipal Progress and Decline in the Italy of the Communes," in *Fritz Saxl 1890–1948* (London: 1957), 165–67. For a comparison of the despair of contemporary Pisan chronicles with the hopefulness of their Florentine counterparts, see E. Cristiani, "Il guidizio sui partiti nei cronisti pisani del Trecento," *Il Molino,* XXV–XXVI (Nov.–Dec., 1953), 581–91. For a general, masterly treatment of the theme of communal historiography in Florence, see N. Rubinstein, "The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* V (1942), 198–227. For an equally telling analysis of "historical method" for the *quattrocento,* see H. Baron, *The Crisis of the Early Italian Renaissance* (Princeton: 1955), I, 38–60, the chapter entitled, "A New View of Roman History and of the Florentine Past."

sufficient, self-assertive elite did not always feel itself bound by the niceties of communal law or the imperatives of the statutes of the republic.

When this group was unthreatened and the community prosperous and secure, disregard for juridical curbs and tribunal dictates was almost chronic. The wealthy and high-born were not averse to evading the rigors of public law, especially when they believed the pronouncements and sentences of the communal courts to be harsh and an abrogation of such ancient political rights as the blood feud or vendetta. Almost any upper-class crime could be construed as a just effort to uphold the honor of self or clan. It was indeed simple to bring judicial dispensation into play. The priorate would be exhorted by an influential clique of Florentines to convene a special commission (*balia*). This commission was staffed by high-born Florentines, affluent judges, well-to-do notaries, and venerable bureaucrats long sensitized to claims for preferential treatment. Meeting with governmental advisers, they would draw up lists of those worthy of dispensation and submit them to the communal councils for approval. In the 1320's and 1330's, these august assemblies, composed of the upper echelons of guild society, proved exceedingly mindful of the status of individuals for whom dispensation was sought. Seldom do we discover a humble artisan or a petty tradesman winning this coveted prize. In fact, judging from the actions of the councils, rampant discrimination was practiced against the lower orders of Florentine society.[19] Needless to say, the few surviving rolls of council membership show that most were kinsmen of the first Florentine families. In addition, only the affluent could take advantage of the system of dispensation, since it was a practice to make a cash settlement—usually 15 per cent of the original fine—with the treasurer.[20]

There were other effective modes of blunting the force of communal law. If an accusation was launched against a high-born Florentine, he might appeal to the self-same communal councils charging that his accuser had been inspired by personal animus. The councils could then vote on the charge, and if they reached a verdict favorable to the appellant, he would not be required to stand trial in a communal court. Or a cruder

[19] For example, if we consider the revocation of bans, we discover that in the month of April, 1341, of the hundreds of sentences rescinded, only two involved lower guildsmen —one miller and one dyer. All the other beneficiaries of communal largesse were men from patrician families. Magnates gained dispensation from convictions on all matter of charges from fraud to treason, but the hosier, Milgliore Milglorini, was refused exoneration for a minor offense by a vote of 103 to 54, and the miller, Giovanni Balduccio, failed to obtain dispensation from a condemnation for milling communal grain badly. Cf. *LF,* XVIII, fols. 31r ff.; *GA,* CCXXII, fols. 55 ff.

[20] *CCE,* I (1334).

procedure might be initiated. Since the late Middle Ages knew no independent judiciary, the priorate or the councils themselves, might instruct a communal magistrate to reverse the verdict of a Florentine court.

Just as telling were the myriad of private petitions presented first to the priorate and then to the communal councils. In monotonous succession, high-born petitioners "humbly and tearfully beseeched" remission from condemnation for such alleged offenses as peculation of public funds or that omnipresent triad of medieval crimes, murder, rape, and arson. Even conviction of that lowliest of all acts—treason—was reversible if the petitioner was an aristocrat and well connected. Whole weeks and months went by during which the councils of the republic did little other than entertain petitions from the scions of the patriciate.[21]

During the 1330's there was an especially lively traffic in pardons. Of the seventy-two urban families inscribed among the republic's magnates, forty-six stood convicted by communal magistrates for grievous offenses against communal law.[22] The shocking inference is that approximately two-thirds of Florentine magnate families contributed generously to the lawlessness of the times. Each great magnate house averaged four condemnations for criminous acts, from bodily assault to homicide and treason. By far the greatest number of their outraged and bloodied victims were humble commoners—artisans and peasants. The Gherardini headed the list for the decade with thirteen convictions for serious offenses. Next came the magnate houses of Aleis and Frescobaldi with ten apiece. The Giandonati had eight convictions; the Buondelmonti and Cavalcanti, seven each. This stark catalogue is far from complete, since many court records were burned in the revolutions of July and September of 1343. Throughout the 1330's and early 1340's the Florentine government permitted these law-breakers to make nominal payments into the communal treasury for the cancellation of severe condemnations and sentences. Indeed, the affluent upper guildsmen were extremely mindful of the claims of their magnate peers for preferential treatment.

The more restricted and hence the more oligarchical the government

[21] I have described elsewhere this type of regime as a "personal" signory and attempted to set up certain pragmatic criteria that might contribute towards a definition of this term. The personal qualities of rule come to the fore most markedly under the hegemony of oligarchs. I attempted to differentiate between oligarchical, popular, and dictatorial governments in the hope that these definitions might have some utility for students of north Italian politics in the late Middle Ages. Cf. M. Becker, "Some Aspects of Oligarchical, Dictatorial, and Popular *Signorie* in Florence, 1282–1382," *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* II (1960), 429–34. For grants of remission, see *GA,* CXXII, especially Part 3.

[22] *Ibid.,* CXXV, especially register marked "Registro dei magnati condannati." Cf. also Vols. CXXI–CXXIV.

became, the more marked was the tendency to deviate from scrupulous legality. Rather than punish the high born, late-thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century regimes frequently resorted to the gentler expedients of admonition and persuasion. Instead of exiling members of warring clans, a general amnesty was decreed or a special commission appointed to make peace between them. The courts were instructed not to prosecute individual clansmen but rather to see that they posted surety for continued good behavior. Upon occasion, hundreds of the *popolani grassi* and magnates alike would be summoned before the priorate. A procession would be formed in the square in front of the communal palace, and the warring houses would march to the Baptistry where they would exchange the kiss of peace and take a public oath never again to have recourse to arms, while the republic's heralds displayed olive branches for all to see.[23]

[23] *Le Consulte della Repubblica fiorentina dall'anno 1280 all'anno 1298,* ed. A. Gherardi (Florence: 1896–98), I, 360–72. (Henceforth these published documents will be abbreviated as *Le Consulte* in order to distinguish them from the unpublished *Consulte e Pratiche* of the fourteenth through the sixteenth centuries. That the commune could and did maintain peace by means of consensus bespeaks both the voluntary origins of the medieval polis as well as the ethos of the later Middle Ages. Urbanism, Franciscanism, the cult of the Virgin, are not unrelated. The consummation of peace, so devoutly to be wished—that peace that according to Dante "passeth understanding"—was to be realized through Peace Associations, by the church, and Peace Guilds sponsored by lay rulers. The same paideia is given voice by the many religious confraternities that sprang from the profusion of lay piety so common to the late Middle Ages. For examples of peace pacts made under the aegis of the early *trecento* Florentine signory, see *P,* XIII, f. 128r (twenty-one Cavalcanti, and numerous Tosinghi are represented); XIV, f. 174r. In this latter document, dated May 17, 1316, the signory appoints special officials "paciarii" to make peace between the Acciaiuoli and Giandonati. Very significant from the point of view of the present study, is the fact that the appointment of such peace officers is a commonplace through the 1330's; after that date this practice tends to become rarer and rarer. In this way government by admonition, exhortation, and persuasion (the sway of the gentle paideia) receded with the passing of the middle years of the *trecento.*

The actions of communal authorities, guild officers, and wardens of religious confraternities to initiate peace during the *dugento* and early *trecento* are a response to a tradition of Christian thought dominant from St. Augustine through St. Thomas. It is this tradition, however, that espouses the metaphysical principle of unity (*principium unitatis* and *ordinatio ad unum*) which is deteriorating. As we move forward chronologically we observe that the norms of law and justice no longer depend upon the conservation of the "universal order." The more theoretical blessings of a "peace" that signified the realization and the confirmation of this "order," of which the *respublica generis humani* is a part, are forestalled in favor of more limited, concrete objectives. Such a "transvaluation" (in the Weberian sense) is encouraged by the resumption of the destructive conflict between *regnum* and *ecclesia* after a brief halt during the pontificate of Innocent III; the alliance between *ethos* and *kratos* was crumbling. Moreover, the commune was gaining strength as a consequence of the innumerable, novel functions it was being asked to assume. The shift from voluntary association to the administrative world of consensus suggests something of the thrust of communal politics in the late Middle Ages. Cf. A. Torre, "Studi di G. Volpe sul medioevo italiano, "*Archivio Storico Italiano,* LXXXIII (1925), 85 ff.; C. Violante, "Per la storia economica e sociale di Pisa

Much more commonplace was the multitude of sentences canceled by the government because the offender and his victim had on their own initiative made a peace pact. So customary was this procedure that the communal treasury charged a small service fee for recording such agreements, and the courts devoted days to their implementation.[24] Those who ruled the republic preferred admonition, exhortation, and moral suasion to the harsher juridical expedients. Such an attitude finds perhaps its most perfect expression in the call for concord and unity so evident in early *trecento* public art as well as in the records of communal debates.[25] Certainly it was this penchant that inspired the frescoes depicting the joys of "good government" in the meeting chambers of many a Tuscan signory.[26]

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nel trecento la riforma della zecca del 1318," *Bulletino Istituto Storico Italiano,* LXVI (1954), 129–205. For a sensitive appraisal of the decline of medieval universalism, see Mario Delle Piane, *Vecchio e nuovo nelle idee politiche di Pietro Dubois* (Florence: 1959), pp. 61–64. I should like to thank my colleague, Professor Hayden V. White, for allowing me to read certain of his material on the thirteenth-century church.

[24] *G.A.,* CXXII, Part 2, fols. 8 ff.; Part 6, fols. 32r ff.

[25] The sympathies of all the major Florentine chroniclers rested with those who spoke for "il bene comune." These are the men who have the public good at heart; the *boni cives* whom the chronicler Dino Compagni refers to as the "gente comune" are the stalwarts of the commonwealth. Cf. *Cronica,* ed. I. del Lungo (Florence: 1889), II, 9; G. Villani, VII, 13; VIII, 69. Indeed most of the political ills besetting Florence could easily be attributed to factious citizenry, unresponsive to *il bene publico.* Cf. Marchionne di Coppo Stefani, *Cronica fiorentina,* ed. N. Rodolico, *Rerum Italicarum Scriptores,* new ed., XXX, Part 1 (Città di Castello: 1903–55), rub. 775, 790; G. Villani, *Cronica,* IX, 271. Donato Velluti, active in civic life during the middle years of the *trecento,* contended that the virus of factionalism only served to inflame the political ambitions of the lower orders, since vying patrician cliques each bid for their adherence. *Cronica domestica,* ed. I. del Lungo and G. Volpe (Florence: 1914), p. 241. Compagni observed that the nobility of the *contado,* "who obey [Florence] more from fear than love," enjoyed the spectacle of discord since it humiliated the arrogant Florentines. *Cronica,* I, 1. There was, then, consensus that "by concord small things increase, by discord great things perish." (Sallust, *Jugurtha,* X, 6.) See also Erich Auerbach's brilliant essay, "Figura," in which he discusses Dante's selection of Cato (he was of course a suicide) to serve as guardian of the Christian Purgatory. He is the very model of justice, piety, and love of freedom, particularly qualified for this exalted role, because he stands "above the parties." Cf. his *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (New York: 1959), pp. 66–67. Especially influential by the late *dugento* were citations from Aristotle's *Politics,* III, 6; *The Summa Theologica,* I, 90; II, 2.

[26] N. Rubinstein, "Political Ideas in Sienese Art," *op. cit.,* 179–94; H. Wieruszowski, "Art and the Commune in the Time of Dante," *op. cit.,* 18–33; C. Brandi, "Chiarimenti sul Buon Governo di Ambrogio Lorenzetti," *Bulletino d'Arte,* XL (1955), 119–23; G. Paccagnini, *Simone Martini* (Milan: 1955), pp. 100 ff.; S. Morpurgo, "Bruto 'il buon giudice,' " *Miscellanea di Storia dell' Arte* (Florence: 1933), 141–63.

The signory much preferred to use suasion rather than coercion to bring about peace and tranquillity. To this extent, then, communal art is reflective of civic practices. The Florentine signory offered every inducement to those willing to make peace. Cf. *Le Consulte,* I, pp. 360, 372; *Archivio Notarile,* A 983, f. 25r; C 102, f. 82. The single act of the despised despot, Walter of Brienne (1342–43), to gain him the plaudits of the

The *popolani grassi* and the magnates repeatedly directed their energies against the very statutes and institutions that had been created to give scope and force to communal law. Seated on the council or serving in the office of treasurer, they would permit back taxes to go uncollected, tolls and gabelles to remain unexacted, forced loans (*prestanze*) to stand well in arrears, and even allow those who had rented communal property to appropriate these valuable holdings for their own private use.

During years of relative tranquillity the permissiveness of the government was perhaps most pronounced in the casual rule of the countryside. The numerous civic responsibilities—castle guard, cart service, maintenance of roads, bridges, communal fisheries and fulling mills, and even service in the militia—were permitted to lapse for a decade or more. Country parishes and rural communes might be fined for failure to report a crime, for giving sanctuary to a known outlaw, or even for refusing to apprehend an exiled Florentine charged with treason or counterfeiting. Yet no payment would ensue. Later, perhaps even several decades afterward, the rectors and syndics of the country town would settle with the treasury for a miniscule fraction of the original fine.[27]

The rule of the elite in Florence also featured the creation of special extraordinary commissions (*balie*). These bodies were granted extensive and unusual powers and were held accountable neither to the communal courts nor to the legislative councils for their actions during their fixed tenure. In the enabling act founding these *balie,* it was proclaimed that the membership were not liable to the time-honored process of syndication, whereby their financial activities would be subject to the scrutiny of communal judges and notaries. We find that during the 1330's, when these *balie* were particularly numerous, they were packed exclusively by the most affluent of the city's magnates and *popolani grassi*—usually bankers.[28]

In this way the great clans were able to punish their enemies and reward their friends with impunity, thereby perpetuating their own

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patriciate, was his general pacification of contentious citizens, who subsequently exchanged the kiss of peace. Certainly the patriciate were accustomed to turning to the signory for the adjudication of vexing issues and, therefore, were favorably disposed towards government by consensus. Even the lesser guildsmen regularly looked towards the signory for resolution of disputes and problems. *P,* IX, f. 138 (Jan. 26, 1299); VI, f. 90r (Aug. 8, 1296); *Diplomatico,* S. Annunziata (Nov. 3, 1339).

[27] *CCE,* I bis, fols. 156r ff.

[28] Most frequently represented on these *balie* were the first families of the republic: the Alberti, Albizzi, Bardi, Peruzzi, Strozzi, and of course the ubiquitous Acciaiuoli. Cf. A. Sapori, *Le crisi delle compagnie mercantili dei Bardi e dei Peruzzi* (Florence: 1926), p. 107. In 1336, for example, the war against Mastino della Scala was placed under the direction of Ridolfo Bardi, Simone Peruzzi, Acciaiuoli Acciaiuoli, Simone della Tosa, Giovenco Bastari, and Chele Bordoni. Cf. *LF,* XVII, f. 30; *P,* XXV, f. 60r.

power. The same men moved regularly from one *balia* to another, so that seldom were these awesome commissions without a representative from the houses of Acciaiuoli, Bardi, Del Bene, Peruzzi, Strozzi, or from a handful of the city's other prominent banking concerns.

During this decade these guildsmen attempted (sometimes unsuccessfully but always with éclat) to rule the government as if it were their own private business preserve.[29] They granted members of their own order exemption from taxation and raised needed revenue by increasing gabelles (indirect taxes that fell, for the most part, upon the masses). The returns from these levies, which were frequently imposts on foodstuffs and other necessaries, were then posted as security for new loans (*prestanze*) to be made by the affluent patriciate to an increasingly beleaguered treasury. These first families thus became the principal holders of public credits at interest rates oscillating between 10 and 15 per cent per annum. Such a return was more than ample, and indeed the polis soon qualified as a profitable field for capital investment.[30]

This restricted patriciate further continued the policy of guild immunity from taxation, heroically resisting all attempts to impose levies on wool and other raw materials necessary for manufacturing. They even repealed the direct tax on urban real estate and capital put into effect under the short-lived signory of Charles, Duke of Calabria (1325–28). This direct tax (*estimo*) was the only major progressive levy collected in the city at this time, since it was the only one based solely upon a citizen's ability to pay. In other words, the patriciate not only avoided their share of the communal tax burden but also stripped the republic of income, diverting it into their own purses by means of inflated interest rates.[31]

## II

The records of the day-to-day activities of the communal councils suggest that this mode of governing was popular with the councilors as

[29] B. Barbadoro, *Le finanze della Repubblica Fiorentina* (Florence: 1929), pp. 560–61.
[30] Returns from business investments and from lands were not so high. During these years the latter averaged perhaps 5 to 7 per cent, while the former amounted to from 8 to 10 per cent. Cf. P. J. Jones, *op. cit.*, pp. 129 ff., and also A. Sapori, *Studi economica*, II.
[31] Upon occasion the special treasurer for the hire of mercenaries paid as much as 20 per cent for short-term loans. Ten to 15 per cent, however, was much more common during this interval. Interest rates paid by commercial companies ran from 6 to 10 per cent, with a medium of 7 to 8 per cent. Indeed, then, government loans could be an exceedingly profitable form of investment. Cf. *ibid*, I, 113 ff., and also E. Bensa, *Francesco di Marco da Prato: Notizie e documenti sulla mercatura italiana del secolo XIV* (Milan: 1928), cited in Sapori, *Studi economica*.

well as with the rank and file of city bureaucracy. The introduction of reform, or even minimal change, would have been doggedly resisted, even though it was becoming all too evident by the beginning of the 1340's that the treasury was confronted with bankruptcy. Seldom did the communal councils sustain enthusiasm for civic sacrifice. Throughout the 1330's these assemblies, staffed by greater guildsmen less affluent only than the Acciaiuoli, Bardi, and Del Bene, were formidable obstacles to the cause of reform. Staunchly and loudly they spoke out against any effort to reintroduce the principle of direct taxation. Moreover, only with the greatest reluctance did they approve modest levies on the countryside. They reserved their most bitter invective for proposals to create additional revenue officials to garner back taxes. Even the initiation of the public magistracies necessary to combat lawlessness were rejected by the membership of these bodies. In fact, rarely did they vote with enthusiasm for any new judicial post, even that of law officer for some remote and cantankerous part of Tuscany. As we shall observe, councilors favored easy, casual rule, relying on interest-bearing loans and indirect taxes to fill the treasury.[32]

Of course only the wealthiest man attained an exalted status in the world of the greater guilds, and it was not unusual for him to consolidate his hard-won position by marrying his daughter into the patriciate or seeking high church office for his sons. Even the most pious or the least attractive of his offspring were sent to a fashionable monastery that catered to the children of the rich and well born. Florentine diaries, memorials, and manner books are replete with prudent counsel for the social climber: Always seek the friendship and support of those who have more "state" (money, power, status) than you; order your wives and your daughters to be friendly with the kin of the powerful; remember that when you seek a husband for your daughter or a wife for your son, look for the offspring of a merchant, both rich and well established in Florence. Make certain that your prospective in-laws are venerable Guelfs and that they play a prominent role in public life. Bitter were the reproaches against those who failed in this mission, for "great power, and in particular the power of leading citizens, commands no loyalty when not accompanied by money or property."[33]

[32] For heavy opposition to imposts on the countryside, see *LF,* XIV, f. 41 (Dec. 18, 1329); XVI, Part 2, f. 77r (Nov. 8, 1335); *Ca.P,* XII, f. 173 (Feb. 1, 1337).

[33] G. Morelli, *op. cit.,* pp. 208–9; G. Corti, "Consigli sulla mercatura d'un anonimo trecentista," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* CX (1952), 115–17; R. Sereno, "The Ricordi of Gino di Neri Capponi," *American Political Science Review,* LII (1958), 1118–22; G. Cavalcanti, *Istorie fiorentine* (Florence: 1838–39), pp. 2–195.

The few who accomplished this feat did so over three or four generations, and they were the first families of the republic in the early *trecento*. Such chroniclers as Giovanni Villani and Ricordano Malespini remembered well the humble origins of many of these new clans (*novi cives*).[34] Thus the way to preferment in Florence was through the entrepreneurial world of the greater guilds where new and old families mingled to form the energetic aristocracy of the late medieval business world. The culture of this restricted patriciate was a blend of Christian *Angst*, business morality, and aristocratic mores, always tempered with a healthy respect for political power. Much might be gained if one exercised authority in the city-state: for example, one could indulge in one of the principal pleasures of life—wreaking vengeance upon one's enemies. If one were not addicted to the vendetta, however, he might win important trade advantages, as did the Acciaiuoli, Bardi, Frescobaldi, Mozzi, Scali, Spini, and a host of other bankers and merchants in high communal office. Adroitly they employed their *auctoritas* to extend the boundaries of their far-flung empire from Naples to Paris, and finally to London.[35]

[34] C. Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome* (Oxford: 1957), p. 260; G. Villani, *Cronica*, V. 39. The term "novi cives" is employed to describe those families only newly come to high Florentine office.

[35] R. Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte von Florenz* (Berlin: 1896–1908), III, 236, 319, 323, 354–57; *ibid.*, IV, 267 ff.; G. Villani, *Cronica*, VII, 42; VIII, 43. For the influence of the great families over ecclesiastical matters, see E. Sanese, "Canonici fiorentini dal sec. XIII al sec. XV," *Atti della Società Colombaria*, VI (1929), 37–51. For a brilliant evocation of high patrician merchant life, the following quote might prove suggestive:

> D'une part, on apercevait la splendeur des cours, auprès desquelles ces merchands étaient traités avec la déférence due à des personnages à qui les princes confiaient le symbole même de la royauté, leur couronne, en faveur de qui ils renoncaient à la prerogative royale de la perception des tributs, à qui ils abandonnaient même leur fortune politique. D'autre part, on apercevait la magnificence des maisons elevées par ces marchands, maisons ou ils menaient une vie princière en contraste avec le train de vie, si modeste, de la plupart des hommes de ce temps-là. C'est dans ces maisons, faute d'édifices publics aussi fastueux, qu'ils donnaient l'hospitalité aux souverains et à leurs suites brillantes, tandis que, dans les boutiques, au rez-de-chaussée de ces palais, se succédaient le mouvement incessant de gens de tous les pays et l'affluence des courriers apportant les nouvelles des regions les plus eloignées. On imaginait la capacité des coffres-forts surveillés, resplendissant de l'or de toutes les monnaies connues. Au dela des murs de la ville, à perte de vue, partout des *case da signore*, élévées au milieu de la luxuriance des vignes et des oliviers, portaient les armoiries des familles marchandes. Les modestes et pauvres maisons *da lavoratori* témoignent que toute une petite armée travaillait pour contribuer au bonheur de ces grands. Autres spectacles encore: dans les salles austères de la seigneurie, ces mêmes marchands, eux encore, couverts de leur *paludamentum*, graves, ayant deposé leur escarcelle garnie d'argent, lache leur faucon de chasse, attache leur cheval aux anneaux du palais, traitaient de pair avec les princes d'Anjou, le roi de France, le Pape, provoquaient des bannissements concedaient des amnisties, accueillaient les supplications des humbles, et pouvaient bien anticiper une phrase orgueilleuse des siècles a venir: "L'État, c'est nous."

High church office, properties confiscated from heretics, patronage over pious foundations, captaincies, vicariates, and treasurerships in the territories of the church were but a few of the spoils that might accrue to the religious-minded.[36] Perhaps even more telling were the advantages to be gained in the local courts and the city councils. Here tax assessments could be reduced, judicial dispensation won, court decisions reversed, exemptions won from the obligation to serve in onerous and ill-paid minor public offices, and, finally, private petitions seeking absolution from even the most heinous crimes could gain a favorable hearing from a sympathetic communal council. To politically sophisticated *trecento* Florentines the lesson was clear: the very preservation of one's person and family might indeed depend upon the proper exercise of political power.[37] Therefore, concomitant with social climbing was political scrambling. There were also a score of lesser advantages to be secured from office holding: communal property could be held at nominal rentals, the right to farm gabelles might be attained for interested parties, or an impover-

Cf. A. Sapori, *Le marchand italien,* p. XXXV, and *Mercatores* (Milan: 1941), pp. 6 ff. For the proud history of the florin, see Cipolla, *Money, Prices and Civilization* (Princeton: 1955). On merchant ties with Naples, see G. Yver, *Le commerce et les marchands dans l'Italie méridionale au XIII^e etau XIV^e siècle* (Paris: 1903). For merchant relations with the papacy, see Y. Renouard, *Les relations des Papes d'Avignon et les compagnies commerciales et bancaires de 1316 à 1378* (Paris: 1941).

[36] One of the great merits of R. Davidsohn's writings—*Geschichte von Florenz* (Berlin: 1896–1927), 4 vols.—is that he demonstrates precisely how the economic interests of the Florentine business community responded to the program initiated by Pope Urban IV and his successors. The Arno merchants and bankers oriented themselves towards Guelfism; Ghibellines were subjected to severe reprisals and even economic blockade. Those mercantile patricians who desired to prosper clustered around the program of Roman Pope and Angevin monarch. With the triumph of Charles of Anjou in the 1260's, the privilege of trading in his newly established south Italian kingdom was bestowed only upon those Florentines known personally to him or who presented "litteras potentes Partis Guelforum florentinorum in quibus sint Guelfi et de Parte Guelforum et Ecclesie Romanae fideles conteneatur expresse." Cf. N. Ottokar, *Il Comune di Firenze,* p. 48. It was the breakdown of this Guelf alliance system, provoked in part by fiscal and foreign policy disasters, that deepened the political crisis of the early 1340's. Cf. N. Rubinstein, "Florence and the Despots: Some Aspects of Florentine Diplomacy in the Fourteenth Century," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 5th series (1952), 28–38.

There was of course great bitterness against those patricians who used high church office to oppress the poor and the weak. Cf. G. Villani, XII, 43; Stefani, rub. 616. Cf. also *Diplomatico,* Dono Canigiani-Cerchi (Aug. 30, 1291), for an example of the acquisition of the property of a condemned heretic by the scion of a great family.

[37] Giovanni Villani (XI, 88) observes that the great family of the Peruzzi were able to withstand bankruptcy for several years because of their patrimony in the *contado* and "per lo l'oro grande potenza e state che aveano in comune." Cf. also A. Sapori, *La crisi delle compagnie,* pp. 117 ff. for an instance of Bardi influence. For the application of political power by a man from a lesser house aimed towards family advantage, see D. Velluti, *op. cit.,* p. 38.

ished member of a patrician family could draw a sizable stipend from the public treasury over many years.[38]

Often certain statutory requirements were waived or conveniently forgotten. A high-born Florentine might be permitted to serve a foreign lord despite express prohibition by public decree; a member of a magnate house whose past behavior had been violent, even chronically criminous, might have his obligation for posting bail waived; a restraint on serving in a particular office imposed upon a once-disloyal family might be canceled; repeated appeals to communal councils and dilatory tactics in the republic's courts might forestall a bankruptcy proceeding; a sympathetic *balia* or the intercession of the priorate might persuade creditors to make lenient settlements with hard-pressed banking houses; individuals declared bankrupt might be restored to active guild membership after a decent lapse of time. Thus, despite the most explicit and stringent regulations to the contrary, all this and much more could be accomplished in the personal world of the Florentine polis, where everyone who counted knew everyone else.[39]

Civic life was intimate and factious; a personal and informal tone dominated the most petty as well as the most pressing political operations. Respect for a panoply of ethical codes, from that of the grasping businessman to that of the tortured mystic, encouraged cultural pluralism. Similarly, sensitivity to a myriad of claims for status, from that of the proud feudatories to that of the humblest monastic recluse, encouraged heterogeneous and untidy social theories. During the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries there was an easy confidence that the many traditions of the later Middle Ages could be comfortably accommodated if each order of society knew its proper place and fulfilled its God-given function.[40] Therefore the signory and its councils placed their faith in the

[38] P. J. Jones, *op. cit.,* p. 181; D. Velluti, *op. cit.,* p. 127. The number of documents preserved in the archives illustrating these matters is legion. But for two examples involving the acquisition of communal property by leading clans, see *Diplomatico,* S. Maria Nuova (Mar. 31, 1335) and *ibid.* (Sept. 24, 1320). The first document concerns the Acciaiuoli, the second the Albizzi.

[39] For this and many related matters, see *Giudice degli Appelli,* CXXII, Part 3 (May, 1341).

[40] On the general accord between the English and Italian views, see S. Thrupp, *The Merchant Class of Medieval London (1300–1500)* (Chicago: 1948), pp. 305 ff. What Professor Thrupp has called the traditional medieval teachings on "social ascent" upheld the virtue of meekness and contentment and minimized the competitive spirit. At the same time, social ambition was not smothered entirely. Society was of course hierarchical, and metaphor was frequently one of position. Such varied authorities as Seneca and St. Thomas were interpreted to lend formidable credence to these views. Only with the coming of the Renaissance were they seriously challenged in Florence.

personal and informal rather than the impersonal and the juridical. A corollary that suggests itself is monumental distrust of communal political power and of the coercive corporate force of the polis.

In other words, both political practice and the communal paideia made the individual, not the collectivity, the locus of virtue. The individual was the unit of trust, the subject of political faith, and—when he failed—the object of political wrath. It would be well to recall that in the thirteenth century the associative impulse was still weak and suspect. Communal politics were discordant and dangerous. The individual could expect only minimal protection and support from the meager forces at the disposal of the polis. That he had ample reason to be suspicious was reflected in practice and paideia.

## III

The late *dugento* and early *trecento* witnessed the erosion of medieval chiliastic movements rooted in a faith that the individual could achieve spiritual renewal with submission to external authority or coercion. The last profusion of messianic writing in north Italy, which stressed the rise of a new age of love, charity, and purity, dwindled in the early fourteenth century. Confidence that the faithful could live "sine vinculo exterioris obedientie sed interiori tantum subiecti et uniti," or that the perfect life can be lived "sine vote," had engendered a moral stance that judged the individual to be righteous while believing the political, social, and indeed ecclesiastical bonds of society to be corrupt.[41] This message was directed

Cf. Felix Gilbert, *Machiavelli and Guicciardini* (Princeton: 1965), pp. 27 ff. Certainly Machiavelli worshiped energy and Guicciardini saw ambition as a prime civic virtue. This was indeed a far cry from the Dantean prescription, according to which political virtue is identical with Christian morality.

[41] For a recent work on this theme, with extensive bibliography, see E. Anagnini, *Dolcino e il movimento ereticale all'inizio del Trecento* (Florence: 1964), pp. 248–74. For additional bibliography, carefully annotated, see R. Manselli, "Per la storia dell' eresia nel secolo XII," *Bulletino Istituto Storico Italiano,* LXVIII (1955), 189–260. It is very significant that it was that generation of contemporaries and near-contemporaries to Dante who were the last great cluster of representatives of the medieval eschatological tradition. To name only the most prominent of their number, we can cite Arnaldo da Villanova, Angelo Clarino, Pier Giovanni Olivi, and Ubertino da Casale. The last two lived in Florence with the young Dante from 1287 to 1289 (R. Davidsohn, *Geschichte,* II, Part II, 275–76). For them, St. Francis was the angel prophesied by Joachim of Flora to herald in the new age of *renovatio.* Cf. C. Davis, *op. cit.,* p. 241. From the vantage point of Florentine experience, Konrad Burdach's view of Cola di Rienzo as a figure who attempted to translate the religious ideals of the *renovatio* from the interiority of man into the sphere of political action is far from gratuitous. Cf. *Reformation, Renaissance, Humanismus* (Berlin and Leipzig: 1926). Rienzo was not an anachronism or a prophet but a man who responded to the crisis of the 1340's, when the ideal of interior *renovatio*

toward all classes; even such radicals as the north Italian religious nonconformist, Fra Dolcino, drew his audience as well as his communicants from the whole spectrum of medieval social orders. The actual implementation of the new rule of love, charity, and purity remained perplexingly vague.

Messianic movements of the early north Italian Renaissance differed from those of the late Middle Ages in that they appealed explicitly to the lower orders of Florentine society and envisaged the Florentine state as the specific mechanism for achieving "renewal." Therefore the later chiliasts, unlike their medieval counterparts, favored the intrusion of the polis into the precincts of the spirit and thus into the lives of the faithful. Very different in tone was the medieval emphasis upon the capacity of the individual soul to release himself from the stern bondage of the law and gain regeneration outside of the vexing, damaging restraints of society.[42] This was the gentle paideia characteristic of the medieval commune which could and did find expression in fare so varied as the prose of Boccaccio's *Ameto* and *Decameron* and the loose, disjointed political style that defended the citizen individual against the claims of society. Perhaps the multiple strand connecting literature, politics, and medieval religious expectancies has its origin in an exaltation of the individual.

One important element of the late medieval messianic tradition fell into disuse. Arno chroniclers, poets, novelists, and political theorists soon tired of the prophetic politicizing of Dante, and within a decade or so his political message had become virtually unintelligible. His notions of the *renovatio* of the church, the empire, and even Christion society were allegorized and misinterpreted by a battery of commentators, not the least of whom was his future devoted disciple and explicator, Boccaccio.[43]

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was less compelling. It is the identical challenge to the faith in the correspondence of renovated self and renovated polis which was to disturb the young Petrarch. That the latter's search for "veritas" was to be within man merely lends emphasis to this fissure. Cf. *Familiari,* IV, 1; R. Morghen, "La lettera di Dante ai Cardinali," *Bulletino Istituto Storico Italiano,* LXVIII (1956), 14–19.

[42] M. Becker, "Florentine Politics and the Diffusion of Heresy in the Trecento: A Socio-Eeconomic Inquiry," *Speculum,* XXXIV (1959), 70-75. The most recent study of the renowned late *quattrocento* Florentine prophet stresses the civic commitment of this fiery Dominican. Cf. D. Weinstein, "Savonarola, Florence, and the Millenarian Tradition," *Church History,* XXVII (1958), 3–17. Formidable religious figures after the mid-*trecento* tended to regard the state as virtually the elect of God, chosen to effect a *renovatio* of Christian society in general and the church in particular. For the career of the most politically influential of these clergy, see I. Hijmans-Tromp, *Vita e opere di Agnolo Torini* (Leiden: 1957), pp. 19–35.

[43] G. Padoan, *L'ultima opera di Giovanni Boccaccio* (Padua: 1959), pp. 77 ff. On the decline of medieval eschatology, see A. Tenenti, *La vie et la mort à travers l'art* (Paris:

Even in Dante's lifetime his faith that Italy might be delivered from the "selva oscura" by a Can Grande della Scala, a Henry VII, an Uguccione della Faggiuoli, or a Benedict XI was renounced by many of his former sympathizers. The age of apocalyptic historicism was already well on the wane; few notable additions were to be made to the renowned eschatology of Joachim of Flora (d. 1202). This most influential of all late medieval historians announced the imminence of the Age of the Holy Spirit, calling for "renovatio ab imis." Already the light of the new times illuminates his age, for the Coming has been prefigured in the person of St. Bernard of Clairvaux. But the history of the thirteenth century did little to substantiate Joachim's glorious prophecy of a universal state where dissent, schism, and even the separation of the Latin and Greek churches will be forever ended. The Christian medieval cosmology that would have subordinated the individual to some shimmering vision of the "last days of the world" had been strained beyond repair. Furthermore, the predictions of events to follow the death of Frederick II in 1250, the golden age to follow 1260, and the glories to greet "the coming of the lamb of God" when Henry VII descended into Italy had only contradicted the prophecies of Joachimite eschatologists.[44]

Dante's own life as well as his poetry stand as a stunning tribute to his inability to submerge either his own personality or that of his finest creation—the pilgrim of the *Divine Comedy*—to any abstract messianic vision of collective spiritual triumph. Not only do poet and pilgrim lack faith in the venerable engines of moral *renovatio*—the papacy and the monastic orders—but, finally, they stand as reluctant witnesses to the destruction of that last of medieval instruments divinely created to achieve the transcendental ends of human history—the Holy Roman Empire.[45]

1952). From the Florentine vantage point the descent of Lewis the Bavarian into Italy in the late 1320's marked the ultimate occasion for the poetic expression of the antique messianic dreams of Guelfism and Ghibellinism. This is also literally true, since after the profusion of patriotic imperial and anti-imperial poetry, the theme became a subject for scorn instead of heroics. Sennuccio del Bene and Francesco da Barberino are the last exemplars of this flaming brand of poetry.

[44] "Ecce Agnus Dei, ecce qui tollit peccata mundi." Cf. Dantis Alagherii, *Epistolae,* ed. P. Toynbee (Oxford: 1920), p. 91 (*Epistola* VII). See also *Epistola* V, where Henry is likened to "another Moses," while the Italians are the Israelites who lament and are soon to be delivered from the oppression of the Egyptians. Dante's contemporaries were well aware that he spoke "after the manner of the prophets of old." Cf. G. Villani, IX, 136. On prophecies following the death of Frederick II, see R. Morghen, *Il tramonto della potenza sveva in Italia* (Tumminelli: 1936), pp. 209 ff. Cf. also A. Dempf, *Sacrum Imperium Romanum,* Italian translation, C. Antoni (Messina-Milan: 1933), pp. 270–76.

[45] See B. Croce's generalizations on late medieval historiography, where the intervention of the divinity becomes blurred and almost contingent. While miracles do indeed occur, they scarcely stir the chronicler—at best they provide him with an opportunity

Surely the kind of energy that propelled such early *dugento* collectivistic expressions of spirituality as the peace movements of the Great Hallelujah or the cry "Pax et Bonum" that greeted the rhythmic motions of St. Francis who almost danced his sermons, terminating them with a song, were on the wane in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The signories did little to encourage the Flagellants who marched throughout northern and central Italy predicting the Apocalyptic Year for 1260. Preaching to thousands, they thundered that Divine wrath could be placated only if men returned to the pristine purity of the age of the apostles. In weaving processions, they stripped the cloaks from their backs, scourged themselves, whipped each other and then preached the spiritual joys of peace. At the base of this politics of ecstasy was of course a conviction of the imminence of the Second Coming. One must forgive his enemies, repair the evils he has perpetrated, and be suffused with love of God and his creatures in order to be divested of that corrupt, earthly identity that must dissolve before "true Christians" achieve the *status sanctorum.* It was precisely this earthly identity that neither Dante nor the pilgrim nor Giotto nor Cimabue could ever lose.[46]

If Dante and the pilgrim stand as exemplars of the insubmergible per-

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to affirm his faith. *Teoria e storia della storiografia* (Bari: 1943), pp. 200 ff. The mystico-political commitments so evident in *dugento* rhetorical manuals and governmental treatises suffers a pronounced setback. The masters of the *dictamen* of late medieval north Italy readily accommodated themselves to the rampant predeliction for finding cosmic or occult relationships between everything and anything. Cf. E. Kantorowicz, "Anonymi, 'Aurea Gemma' " *Medievalia et Humanistica,* I (1943), 49 ff. See especially the *Dictamina* and the *Epistulae* of Guido Fava, where the political conception behind the writings is medieval. Pope and emperor head the ecclesiastical and feudal hierarchies, and these are viewed in the mutual relationship of higher to lower ("de maiore ad minorem"). Cf. H. Wieruszowski, "Ars Dictaminis in the Time of Dante," *Medievalia et Humanistica,* I (1943), 95–108. If we follow Erich Auerbach, we witness the successive disappointments of Dante in commune, church, and emperor. The poet then translates his messianic faith to the written word—his own poetry. This would be something of the notion of poesis. As we have noted, his contemporaries—chroniclers like Villani and Compagni—did not organize historical experience of their own time in traditional forms. On Dante's deep disenchantment with the church after the death of Henry VII, see E. Gorra, "Dante e Clement V," *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana,* LXIX (1917), 207–10.

[46] E. Auerbach, *Mimesis* (New York: 1957). Man has a "true" historical existence even though his fulfillment comes in the next world. Personality, therefore, is realized in the figural-Christian conception of the world. Auerbach convincingly grounds his argument in the Christian exegetical tradition. Perhaps a manifestation of this same conception of personality is to be found in the gradual intrusion of the biographical eulogistic element, which can be observed first in the funereal monuments of north Italy in the early part of the *trecento.* Full-size statues portraying the deceased as a living personality were placed above his recumbent image or even substituted for it. Cf. A. Tenenti, *Il sense della morte e l'amore della vita nel rinascimento* (Turin: 1957), pp. 22 ff.; E. Panofsky, *Tomb Sculpture* (New York: 1964), 74–75.

sonality, they were only the more aesthetic counterparts of Guido Cavalcanti, Dino Compagni, Francesco da Barberino, Monte Andrea, Brunetto Latini, Simone Antella, Sennuccio del Bene, and a myriad of other poets, chroniclers, and public officials who moved through the labyrinthian world of the polis bereft of the certainties of earlier medieval collectivistic spiritualities and messianic historicisms.[47] The careers of Guelfs, Ghibellines, faction men, and finally "political independents" stand as a tribute to the ability to exercise political free will in a world where guidelines were becoming more and more blurred. Their faith not their choices is at issue. It entailed, first of all, a confidence in man's abilities to navigate the troubled waters of politics without messianic compass or eschatological chart. Secondly, it included a commitment to the notion that there was dignity in deep citizen involvement with the life of the polis. Finally, it should be remembered that such men as Dante, Latini, and Villani never entertained the hostility of the heterodox toward the polis. Unlike the earlier chiliasts, who in the name of a spiritualized collectivity saw the state and civil society as an unmitigated evil to be terminated with the victory of the "true spirit over the corrupt world *in istis temporibus novissimis,*" these later Florentines believed that the *civitas* presented an unrivaled opportunity for gaining virtue by private sacrifice for public good (*il bene del comune*).[48]

The late-thirteenth- and early-fourteenth-century political polemicist took a much more favorable view of the motive force for citizen participation in the life of the state. The prevailing Augustinian analysis of human motivation in the polis was summarily rejected. No more did Florentines fervently argue that what passes for patriotism and civic nobility is but a diseased appetite for glory. To Dante, Barberino, Boccaccio, Giotto, and Latini, the more despairing elements of the Church Fathers' psychology became anathema. With the advent of the more optimistic credo of St. Thomas and the scholastics, pamphleteer and polemicist began to argue heatedly if redundantly for man's capacity for disinterested and therefore noble civil action. Was not the heroism of antique Romans sufficient guarantee that such virtue is attainable? Chroniclers and poets agreed that Florence is "the daughter of Rome" and that *virtu Romana* had thus been transmitted to the descendants of a Cincinnatus, a Fabri-

[47] At present I am preparing a study on late medieval north Italian political poetry. In addition to the poets cited in the text, Guido Orlandi, Pietro de' Faitinelli, Chiaro Davanzati, and Cino da Pistoia shall be considered. For a distinction between "poesia popolare" and what Benedetto Croce refers to as "poesia d'arte," see *La Critica,* XXVII (1929), pp. 321 ff.

[48] See the grand prose of Dante, *Monarchia* II, 5, where he soulfully describes those Romans "mindful of the common good."

cius, and a Torquatus by blood inheritance. Dante's pilgrim opined that the great menace to the well-being of the city stemmed from mixing Roman blood, which hankers for law and order, with the corrupt blood of the Etruscans or the treasonous Catilinarians.[49] What after all does it mean to be a Florentine other than to be a latter-day Roman? Supported by the best genetics of the day, this was a far from rhetorical question.

The driving optimism of the Thomistic tradition, which accepted the world and earthly experience as positive, is voiced by preacher, chronicler, and poet. The natural order for them was ontologically good. Grace does not destroy nature; it perfects it. The natural realm is permeated by law and is itself efficiently self-contained. An understanding of the world of nature and men is possible, and political life is "natural" to man, not a consequence of original sin. Since there is in man a natural inclination toward the good which he has in common with all substances, the law of nature corresponds to man's natural inclinations. Thus Brunetto Latini lectured to Florentines of several generations that man, who is by nature a "political animal," is equipped by nature to seek the "highest good." This expansive version of Aristotle's far from hopeful musings on the life of the polis was sufficiently convincing to chronicler Giovanni Villani to inflict the insipid message upon his mind forever. When the encyclopedic Thomistic-Aristotlian Latini died, Villani accorded this popularizer of hopeful political maxims on love, country, and citizen capacity for *amicitia* the highest place in the parthenon of the polis.[50] We all recall with what pain Dante relegated his acknowledged political mentor to the *Inferno,* so much had the poet learned from the doctrines of Latini. The Dominican lector, Remigio di Girolami (1235–1319), was inspired by identical sentiments when he preached to the Florentines: "If you are not a citizen, you are not a man, because man is naturally a civil animal." Seldom do speakers, from Latini through Petrarch and Coluccio Salutati, fail to quote Cicero's maxim at an appropriate moment in letter or oration: "We were not born for ourselves alone: to part of us our native land lays claim, and to part our friends." That man was "un animale civile" or that he was "compagnevole" was by now an abiding article of Florentine political faith.[51] Furthermore, citizenship in the sense

[49] C. Davis, *op. cit.,* 94–98; *Paradiso* XVI, 46–51, 67–68; *Epistola* VI, 2; VII, 5.

[50] G. Villani, VIII, 10. Friendship is a particularly significant ingredient of the gentle paideia. See Latini's poem, "Favolello," which like so many works on this theme is based upon the recently translated eighth book of Aristotle's *Ethics.* Cf. also *Convivio,* III, 2; IV, 1.

[51] G. Billanovich, "La traduzione del 'liber de dictis philosophorum antiquorum' e la cultura di Dante, del Petrarca e del Boccaccio," *Studi Petrarcheschi,* I (1948), 111–23. Perhaps the most perfect statement of this creed is rendered by Brunetto Latini: To be

of the identity that a man derived from the life of the polis was reckoned an unmixed blessing. In the eighth canto of the *Paradiso,* Carlo Martello asks the pilgrim: "Now say would it be worse for man on earth were he no citizen?" The pilgrim immediately volunteers an affirmative, which he considers so self-evident that he adds, "and here I ask no reason."[52]

The same Brunetto Latino who according to the chronicler Villani had instructed Florentines how to govern the polis in accord with the political maxims of Aristotle defines the city as an assemblage of people that enables men to live in a manner consonant with reason. This faith that the republic may be guided "secondo la politica" ranks second only to his confidence in man's capacity to be moved to virtue through rhetoric. According to Dante it was for teaching his compatriots to make themselves immortal through rhetoric that he won the accolade.[53]

In Florence there occurs a transvaluation of Christian doctrine which found its most perfect expression in the invective of Pope Gregory VII against Emperor Henry IV. Anti-imperial writers were prone to argue for

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a citizen is not only good but it is necessary, for man is by nature a "compagnevole animale" ("political animal"); therefore it follows that man can only find the "good life" in civil society and the commune is the end and as it were the crown of the true nature of man. Cf. F. Maggini, *La "Rettorica Italiana" di Brunetto Latini* (Florence: 1915), pp. 33 ff. These are the "comunale gente" so lauded by Donato Velluti, who despise factions and "amavano di bene vivere." Cf. *Cronica domestica,* pp. 172, 240–42. The antithesis of these "boni cives" are the individuals who "have more mind for vengeance than peace." D. Compagni, III, 8; Stefani, rub. 557, 564, 588. Aquinas' favorite simile for human society was that of a city, informed by reason, in which every man was equally at home and thus the friend of his neighbor. Moreover, this friendship imposed the sacred obligation of educating oneself and one's neighbors. Dante was of course very susceptible to both the figure of speech and the argument. Cf. *Monarchia,* ed. G. Vinay (Florence: 1950), p. 135, n. 8. The term "compagnevole," so tellingly employed by earlier writers, gives way in the early *quattrocento* to expressions such as "to live politico," or to have a soul "civile," or to conform to the "uso civile." These citations suggest the growing stringency of the rule of law so evident after the mid-*trecento.* Cf. C. Varese, *Storia e politica nella prosa nel Quattrocento* (Turin: 1961), p. 147; E. Garin, *Il pensiero pedagogico dello umanesimo* (Florence: 1958), p. 89.

[52] A. P. d'Entrèves, *Dante as a Political Thinker* (Oxford: 1952), pp. 11–12. Well imbedded in the Christian medieval tradition, of course, was St. Augustine's maxim, "non muri sed mentes" make the *civitas.* See also the speech of Marco Lombardo with his commitment to the "vera cittade," although only the tower is barely visible. *Purgatorio,* XVI, 94 ff. The Dominican lector whose influence on Dante has been detected, Fra Remigio de' Girolami (1235–1319), said it most aptly: "If you are not a citizen, you are not a man, because a man is naturally a civil animal." Cf. L. Minio-Pavello, "Remigio de' Girolami's 'De Bono communi' " *Italian Studies,* XI (1956), 56–59; C. Davis, "An Early Florentine Political Theorist," *op. cit.,* 662–72.

[53] *Inferno,* XV, 85; M. Becker, "Notes from the Florentine Archives," *Renaissance News,* XVII (1964), 201–2. A. P. d'Entrèves, *op. cit.,* p. 4, conjectures that it may have been from his self-acknowledged teacher, Latini, that Dante learned the first definition of the city as "una raunamento di gente fatto per vivere a ragione."

the *de facto* basis for the Roman Empire, setting against it the *de jure* theory of the foundation of the church. Their premise was simplicity itself: force, not reason, had been the rock on which the Romans built their imperial sway. Dante tells us that only much later, and after considerable reflection, was he to correct the earlier impressions he had voiced on this perplexing question in one of his first writings, the *Convivio*. "At one time," he admits, he "marveled that the Roman people had been raised to supremacy on the terrestrial globe with none to resist." At first he ascribed their triumph to the might of arms and their capacity for violence, but when he examined the matter more carefully he was to discern that it was not force that had raised Rome to exalted heights, but reason. He concludes that not only was political man capable of civic unselfishness but that his actions and the very life of the polis could be ruled by reason.[54]

These ideals had come to be incorporated into the gentle paideia of a communal society which asserted that men by their very nature were admirably qualified to make the choice between good and evil. Perhaps for the first time in Europe since classical antiquity, we discover authors such as Francesco da Barberino employing Hercules as a symbol of man's ability to make just such a civic choice. Giotto's designs for the Campanile reliefs (1334) likewise celebrate the victory of human intelligence over chaos with scenes drawn not only from the Bible but from ancient mythology as well, with the figures of Hercules and Cacus, and Dedalus proudly displaying his wings.[55] What if any connection might there be between republic and citizen? Florentine historiography gives us the

[54] A judicious estimate of this difficult matter is found in C. Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome,* pp. 40–73. It might be observed that the religious nonconformists of the later Middle Ages, while taking a most hopeful view of man's capacity to achieve spiritual regeneration, did stress the sinful origin of the state. Certainly, a quantitative evaluation of the debt of the gentle paideia to heterodoxical beliefs, both in the perfectability of man and in the ultimate withering away of the state, cannot be made. Yet we can infer that the debt was ample. Moreover, emphasis upon *carità, amore,* and practical religious piety, coupled with the bitter attacks upon the legalism of the established medieval church, served to create a milieu favorable to the burgeoning of this paideia. (The term "nonconformist" is employed in the same spirit as that of K. B. McFarlane in his study, *John Wycliffe and the Beginnings of English Nonconformity* (London: 1952).

A possible source for Dante's altered views on Rome may be the writings of Ptolemy of Lucca. It is worth noting that this able publicist argued in 1300 that the forces which impelled Rome to power were "amore, patriae, zelus iustitiae, and zelus civilis benevolentiae." Cf. T. Silverstein, "On the Genesis of *De Monarchia* II, V," XIII (1938), 328–30; K. Vossler, *Die göttliche Komödie* (Heidelberg: 1925) I, 263–64.

[55] E. Panofsky, *Studies in Iconology* (New York: 1962), p. 157; T. E. Mommsen, "Petrarch and the Story of the Choice of Hercules," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* XVI (1953), pp. 178 ff.

answer early in the thirteenth century. The *Libro Fiesolano, Chronica de origine civitatis,* and *Gesta florentinorum* brim with unabashed patriotism and a civic faith. So does the inscription on the walls of the Bargello or Palazzo del Podestà. This first great work of civic architecture was erected during the middle years of the *dugento,* and the inscription betrays the ummitigated confidence in the destiny of the polis to be shared by so many writers and artists until the early 1340's:

> Florence is full of all imaginable wealth
> She defeats her enemies in war and in civil strife,
> She enjoys the favor of fortune and has a powerful population;
> Successfully she fortifies and conquers castles,
> She reigns over the sea and the land and the whole of the world
> Under her leadership the whole of Tuscany enjoys happiness;
> Like Rome she is always triumphant . . . .[56]

Although it does not break architecturally with the castle style—it strongly resembles the imposing Castello di Poppi, which belonged to leading Tuscan feudal nobles—the Bargello was sufficiently audacious to proclaim Florentine civic conceit—the hauteur of the polis—in the sight of all.

There is what a recent commentator calls "naive optimism" in the early Florentine chronicles and histories. This attitude is almost antithetical to the insecurity and overt fear often manifest in the historical writings of that north Italian cradle of late medieval scientism and classicism, Padua. There, at the very vortex of intense historical activity, argues Professor Nicolai Rubinstein, is displayed a feeling of insecurity "generated by political mutability." [57] It was this absence of confidence in the durability of the polis that prevented Padua's philosophically oriented historians from feeling that optimism so evident in the writings that sprang from the communal paideia. It was the black conviction of the remarkable Paduan late medieval writers, from Giovanni da Nono through Albertino Mussato (*De Traditione Patavi ad Canem Grandem anno 1328*), that peace and prosperity do not long endure. Short intervals of civic virtue are followed by shattering decline. The metaphor they applied to the polis is biological: with monotonous regularity the town is compared to the disintegrating human body, ever occupied in the gruesome task of dying. Pisa and many another Tuscan town were preoccupied with the

[56] N. Rubinstein, "The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence," *op. cit.,* p. 213. For a transcription, see R. Davidsohn, *Forschungen,* IV, 497–98. The inscription can still be seen outside the Bargello.
[57] N. Rubinstein, "Some Ideas on Municipal Progress and Decline," *op. cit.,* pp. 167–68. Cf. also n. 18.

same bleak, unequal contest between *fortuna* and *natura* which can only be resolved in an ever-downward series of cycles.[58]

Not so in Florence, where the young Giovanni Villani not only saw the Arno city as a second Rome but compared the progress and grandeur of his beloved republic with the decline and disarray of the Eternal City. The disasters of the early forties finally undermined his faith in the durability and glory of the commune. For over a decade chroniclers made only the most awkward and hesitant assertions of civic faith to punctuate the long Jeremiads which were the principal stuff of their histories.[59]

## IV

The most popular preachers in early *trecento* Florence addressed large crowds in the piazzas and churches, sometimes two and three and even five times each day. Patiently they would remind their audiences that in "la cittade bene ordinata" each individual has a vital role to perform. Even the humblest of artisans can and does make a valuable contribution to the well-being of the commonwealth. No major Florentine writer, from Brunetto Latini in the mid-*dugento* to Giovanni Boccaccio in the mid-*trecento,* would dispute the wisdom of this statement. For was not the capstone of the communal paideia erected on the proposition that true nobility was dependent upon deeds rather than birth? Such a hopeful ideal bespoke that easy confidence of the late medieval Florentine world in the capacity of the individual to perform the socially useful act without benefit of pressure of caste or pride of clan or, most relevant of all, coercion of government.[60]

[58] E. Cristiani, "Il guidizio sui partiti nei cronisti pisani del Trecento," *op. cit.,* pp. 581–99.

[59] G. Villani, VIII, 36. If one took the expression "turning point" literally, then the chronicle of Matteo Villani would be of primary assistance in determining its locus. Following his brother, the successive prologues to each of his books seem to gain a new nadir of despair. Like his more famous kinsman whose chronicle became dispirited in the early forties, he, too, chose to stress "the obscure veil of ignorance" that conceals "the dubious ends of mortal sin." Almost gladly he announces that all human effort is in vain, and only divine intercession can save "the fallen mankind." All has been provoked by our "sinful, corrupt nature," which produces "disordered appetites." Against the drab background of mutability and man's impotence, Matteo assembles his "varia e calamitosa materia." With Book VIII, however, in 1358, the tone of the chronicle changed dramatically. The period of "the long Jeremiads" had lasted approximately a decade and a half.

[60] On sermons, see *Prediche del beato fra Giordano da Rivalto* (Florence: 1738), pp. 280 ff.; N. Rodolico, *Il popolo minuto (1343–1378)* (Bologna: 1899), pp. 16–18.

On the theme of the nobility of deeds rather than of birth, see *Convivio,* II, 17–18, and D. Guerri, "La disputa di Dante Alighieri con Cecco d'Ascoli sulla nobiltà," *Giornale Storico della Letteratura Italiana,* LXVI (1915), 128–39. For a comparison of the appropriate passages and a discussion of the obligations Dante owed to the opti-

That all men were desirous of knowledge and that the most meaningful insights could be won through the civilizing experience of love was almost unanimously upheld by artist, philosopher, and literary man alike during the early years of the *trecento*. Was it not as St. Augustine had said, that the human soul is shaped by what it loves? Mystic, troubadour, medieval epic, the cult of the Virgin—each conspired to cause this notion to acquire metaphysical wonder. Dante's *Vita Nuova* stood as resplendant testimony to this radiant postulate of late medieval Christian psychological exegesis. The *Purgatorio* of his *Divine Comedy* was yet another evidence of the transforming power of *amore* in the affairs of men, just as the *Inferno* stands as a terrible witness to its perversion. The very ethical order of the *Divine Comedy* is of course governed by the Thomistic-Aristotelian principle that all vices are merely perversions of *carità* and *amore*. For Dante, the soul is defined not only by what a being loves, but its inner quality can be discerned simply by beholding the things for which the *anima* feels *amore*. Lastly, Dante expressed an even stancher optimism when he averred the ultimate compatibility of human and divine love.[61] This is his particular philosophical contribution to the poetry of his times. Although many might have denied or at least been skeptical of this blissful possibility, not even the involuted and masochistic Guido Cavalcanti would have taken exception to the belief that sensual love is capable of ample refinement.[62] Meanwhile, Tuscan artists from Cimabue to Giotto sought to give form to this convergence of the sacred and the profane.[63]

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mistic definitions of nobility furnished by the *Summa* of Aquinas, see M. Corti, "Le fonti del 'Fiore di Virtù' e la teoria della nobiltà nel duecento," *ibid.*, CXXXVI (1959), 66–67. Latini's borrowings for his *Tresor* from classical and contemporary sources is likewise treated. Cf. *Ibid.*, 69–70. The author contends that the "new intellectual ferment" was a consequence of nothing less than "rivincita civico-borghese"—that is, a resultant of social conditions most generously defined, rather than a consequence of the upsurge of Aristotelian-Thomistic thought or of revivified Guelf sentiment. The flowering of communal culture was, if you will, an existential rather than an essential development.

[61] C. Singleton, *An Essay on the Vita Nuova* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1958). For the text, see *La vita nuova,* ed. M. Barbi (Florence: 1907). On the general and neglected themes of *amore* and *carità,* quickened in the late Middle Ages by St. Bernard and the Cistersians, see P. Rousselot, *Pour l'histoire du problème de l'amour au Moyen Âge* (Paris: 1933).

[62] J. Shaw, *Guido Cavalcanti's Theory of Love* (Toronto: 1949). On a debate concerning the *nobiltà* of man, see D. Guerri, *op. cit.*, pp. 128–37.

[63] The most useful recent study of this critical theme is Eugenio Battisti's *Cimabue* (Milan: 1963), pp. 18–80. The difference between the art of the age of Giotto and the earlier Italo-Byzantine school is to be discerned in the new ethical attitude so pervasive at the end of the *dugento*. This Weltanschauung is committed to the notion that sacred events can be treated as historical episodes possessing the temporal dimension that renders them objectively real, i.e., having their locus in time and space as they are humanly conceived. Moreover, such a Weltanschauung is destructive of the millenarian

The theme of the civilizing force of love is reiterated by Boccaccio in all his youthful works through the *Decameron.* Only with the *Corbaccio,* written in 1354–55, does the author abandon this hopeful theme. In the earlier *Ameto,* a "rude shepherd and hunter" falls in love with a nymph, and thus "is love the beginning of *civiltà* and of purification." In the *Decameron,* an idiot is transformed into a gallant as the consequence of his love for a fair lady. The whole of the *Filostrato* celebrates the softening, humanizing effect of love upon the high-born and scornful Troilus. Neither the Troilus of high lineage nor the "rozzo" (crude) shepherd Ameto could lay claim to virtue before experiencing love. Thus it is not lineage or political experience that creates the true noble—the generous, magnanimous gallant whose joy overflows into good will for the world.[64]

Again Boccaccio voices his unstinting admiration for the ideal types of bourgeois Florence, courtly Naples, and rustic Tuscany; each can make an invaluable contribution to the ideal citizen of the ideal polis. Like Latini, Dante, Francesco da Barberino, Giovanni Villani, and a host of others, Boccaccio subscribes to that bland but encouraging Aristotelian commitment to man's sociability. An entire generation of writers had dedicated their careers to understanding the essentials of *cortesia* and determining how a zealous aspirant might achieve it. While northern poets discovered whole series of disquieting contradictions in its acquisition as well as in the virtue itself, most Tuscan authorities on "i fiori di parlare di belle cortesia" were struck by its compatibility. To them it involved no debilitating contest between "amor Dei" and "amor mundi" that culminated in an endless chain of futile knightly quests. Instead, *cortesia* became an ethical norm. For Dante, it encompassed all the civic virtues; in its most exquisite form it was considered an attribute of God, who is spoken of as "Sire di cortesia." More usually, however, *cortesia* was that goodness of mortal souls which enabled them to extinguish hatred and conserve love. It represented an attainable ideal of nobility comprising *bellezza, pietà,* and *misericordia.*[65]

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tradition of schematization. Biblical heroes conduct themselves and their affairs like virtuous citizens. Sanctity is not in celestial grace so much as in honest social comportment.

[64] This theme is first foreshadowed in the *Caccia di Diana,* where the Circe motif is reversed: men are not turned into beasts by sensuality, but rather into "eager, handsome youths by love." Cf. A. Scaglione, *Nature and Love in the Late Middle Ages* (Berkeley: 1963), pp. 185–86; *Decameron,* V, 1; *Testi fiorentini del duecento e dei primi del trecento,* ed. A. Schiaffini (Florence: 1926), pp. 80 ff.

[65] A Vallone, *La "cortesia" dai provenzali a Dante* (Palermo: 1950), *passim* but especially pp. 41–50; G. Bertoni, *I trovatori d'Italia* (Modena: 1915); R. Garofalo, *La vendetta e il perdono in Dante* (Naples: 1903).

The world of *cortesia* was translated into a variety of meaningful symbols by a generation of poets and artists convinced that the courage and honor of the medieval noble could be fused with the ethic of the merchant, *savio et ben parlante.* Certainly Boccaccio harbors an ungrudging admiration for the best of the bourgeois aristocracy and considers them in no way inferior to the great feudatories. Like the nobles, they suffered danger and risked death in their far-flung business ventures. For the author of the *Decameron,* the merchant carries *civiltà* to far-off lands, not by arms and violence but through law and magnanimity.[66] A further apotheosis is to be found in the chronicles of the young Giovanni Villani, who calls them "the pillars of Christian society." [67]

The same faith, according to Giovanni Villani, prompted Brunetto Latini to comment, in the vernacular, on the rhetoric of Cicero, to write the *Treasure, the Little Treasure, The Key to the Treasure,* and so many books on philosophy "concerning vices and virtues." This writer of "good and useful" books, says Villani, though he was a "worldly man" (a sodomite), deserved to be lauded "because it was he who was the beginner and master in refining [*digrossare*] the Florentines and in teaching them how to speak well, and how to guide and rule our republic according to policy." The word "digrossare" is a compelling description not only of the civic commitment of Latini but of the very ethos of communal *civiltà.* This ethos is resolutely expressed from the aristocratic condescension of the proem of *The Hundred Old Tales* (*Il Novellino, ca.* 1300) through the frank egalitarianism of Dante's *Convivio, Monarchia,* and *De Vulgari Eloquentia.*[68]

*The Hundred Old Tales* bespeaks what the burgher can learn from the world of the medieval courtier:

[66] See Boccaccio's *Epistola* XVIII to Jacopo da Pizzinga in which he announces that the merchant does not triumph through "fraude vel violentia vel ambitione vel decipulis sibi honores exquirere, sed laudabili exercito." Cf. V. Branca, *op. cit.,* 118–120. The gentle paideia stresses the compatibility of knight and burgher; both are indeed capable of achieving what Georg Weise speaks of as the High Gothic chivalric *courtois.* Each can entertain the possibility of refined idealistic spiritualization. This "Idealität und Verfeinerung" or "Spiritualisierung" are confident goals of that *civiltà* associated with the art and literature of the High Gothic in general and Tuscany in particular throughout the many writings of Weise. The present study supports his findings and further suggests that this confidence commences to decline shortly after the death of Giotto in the late 1330's and early 1340's. For extensive recent bibliography, see Weise's *L'ideale eroico del Rinascimento* (Naples: 1961), pp. 335–36.

[67] For a sympathetic treatment of this heartfelt commitment of the chronicler, see V. Branca, *op. cit.,* pp. 71–74.

[68] Translation from the abridged English edition of *Villani's Chronicle,* ed. R. Selfe and P. Wicksteed (London: 1906), pp. 312–13; A. Borlenghi, *La struttura e il carattere della novella italiana dei primi secoli* (Milan: 1958), pp. 24–28.

> And since the noble and the gentle, in their words and deeds, are as a mirror for the lower folks, for that their speech is more gracious, coming from a more delicate instrument, let us call back to memory some flowers of speech, such fair courtesies and fine replies, valiant actions, and noble gifts as have in time gone by been accomplished by many.

The *Convivio* stands as an eloquent if cluttered testament in the vernacular to Dante's overarching will to write a major philosophical work that would seek to popularize not the manners and etiquette of the court but the scholasticism of the medieval university. Moreover it is a tribute to the poet's confidence not only that thirteenth-century science and philosophy are compatible with the truths of revelation but also that the businessmen, bankers, and industrialists of Florence are capable of mastering the subtleties of dialectic. His loftiest work, the *Monarchia,* proclaims the continuity and increase of human knowledge—despite his exile and suffering at the hands of his contemporaries. Further, this majestic polemical tract argues that the most exalted work of mankind is to keep the whole capacity of human potential constantly actualized. In plainer, non-Aristotelian language, one must share with one's fellow citizens the fruits of human knowledge and experience. Lesser didactic writers, compilers of theoretical prose treatises and manuals on rhetoric, avoided the high road of aesthetics and philosophy. They explain that they are writing for the "less cultivated folk" (*le persone meno colte*). Their audience are the "rudes" of the commune whose civic virtue was to make them receptive to the *Rhetorica Nova.*[69]

[69] A. Sorbelli, "I teorici del reggimento comunale," *Bulletino Istituto Storico Italiano,* LIX (1944), 38–42. This eagerness to celebrate the glories and possibilities of the acquisition of knowledge has no parallel in medieval Italian history. *Dugento* civic writers and political figures from Bono Giamboni and Albertano da Brescia to Brunetto Latini and Francesco da Barberino quote from a text inexplicably attributed to Seneca: "If I were near death, even had one foot in the grave, I would want to learn." M. Corti, "Le fonti del 'Fiore di Virtù,'" *op. cit.,* 79–81. Both Dante, in *Convivio,* IV, 5, and Giovanni Villani, I, 30, make Cicero "uno nuovo cittadino di picciola condizione," superbly trained in rhetoric, who is to thwart the high-born Catiline. Cf. also C. Davis, *op. cit.,* p. 91. In the *Proem* of the *Novellino* (the Panciatichiano manuscript) it is noted that when Christ walked the earth he spoke "umanamente" in the language of the people "in the abundance of his heart." Cf. L. di Francia, *Novellistica* (Milan: 1924), I, 26–28. The essential openous of the ideal is further suggested by the civic architecture of Tuscany at this time. While the parliaments and large citizen assemblies had little power in the late *dugento,* the democratic ideal of participation by *il popolo* in public affairs was still compelling. We find huge halls with large windows on the upper floors and open loggias on the lower floor for town meetings. The Palazzo del Popolo was begun in San Gimignano in 1287, in Florence and Pistoia in 1294, and in Siena in 1297. The architect for the Palatium Populi Florentini was of course Arnolfo di Cambio. Its vigorously geometric character and bossed rustication recall the enclosing walls of the Forum of Augustus. The wide space of the central nave of Santa Croce and the massive

These new dramatis personae are neither crowned nor adorned. Clad in simple robes, they stand solemn and self-contained, willing and anxious to demonstrate their profound humanity. Their finest representatives are the "senatorial apostles" who move through the frescoes of Giotto, who manifest the dignity in the humblest routine acts of ordinary men. Indeed, such virtue is attainable by all who practice moderation and self-mastery. The true nobility of Giotto's frescoes is in the expression of the face and the dignity of the body, not in insignia of rank or opulence of apparel. Nor does the noble act take place in the timeless world of the transcendent, but rather in the turbulent present even within the walls of cities not unlike medieval Florence and Padua.[70]

The frescoes of Giotto's most gifted pupil, Taddeo Gaddi, continued the compelling yet everyday scenes of his master. The meeting of Joachim and Anna at the Golden Gate is a paean to the dignity of a love that allows of communication. Painting this event from the *Golden Legend*—possibly the most exquisite expression of late *dugento* north Italian protohumanism—Gaddi ranged farther than Giotto in his deep interest in the surroundings of the holy couple. His treatment proclaims a confident, rational relationship between figure and world, one that is even capable of mathematical explication. With Gaddi, noble acts occur in a universe human in scale. The balance between the figures themselves is more carefully planned. As did Giotto, Gaddi rewards dignity with, and renders it by, monumentality. He bestows immortality upon his subject by emphasizing durability of the virtuous soul.[71]

## V

As Cacciaguida looms central in Dante's *Paradiso* not because of his proud lineage but for his virtuous deeds, so do the "upstart people"—those suddenly enriched with unlawful gains—stand somewhere well within the vortex of the *Inferno*. It is exactly this precarious balance be-

control that holds the aspiring verticalism in check also bespeak Arnolfo's commitment to those forms most appropriate to the gentle paideia. Further evidence of this can be discerned in that markedly Arnolfian feature of the cathedral then under construction, in which the quest for the infinite (the vertical ascent) was limited by the strongly projecting cornice. Nowhere does the distrust of the ecstatic and the faith in the moderate find such unrivaled expression. Cf. K. Frey, *Die Loggia dei Lanzi* (Berlin: 1885), pp. 77 ff; N. Rodolico, "I palazzi pubblici comunali," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* CXX (1962), 449–558.

[70] M. Meiss, *Painting in Florence and Siena After the Black Death* (Princeton: 1951), pp. 5–9.

[71] Cf. E. Battisti, *Rinascimento e barocco* (Turin: 1961), pp. 37 ff.

tween commitment to an open society and the desire to preserve traditional values that distinguishes Florentine thought from Latini through the Villani of the 1340's. Few would question Aristotle's belief in a mixed constitution, and certainly the chroniclers are stalwarts of a signory in which all the orders of medieval society are accorded representation. Giovanni Villani, no friend of the upstarts, never gainsays their right to representation. He even criticizes certain governments because they neglected, even trampled upon, the rights of these *novi cives*.[72] Until the early 1340's, then, Florentines would have challenged the moderate implementation of a mixed constitutional system, if by this term it is implied that the new and the old citizens both should hold office. But the new citizens must always be clearly in the minority and always anxious to follow the political lead of the experienced patriciate.

Dante, Villani, Boccaccio, and Latini would have felt little sympathy for any political regime in which the newer elements were granted more than a modest share of communal posts. The first four decades of the fourteenth century were a model of the moderate commitment of contemporary literary men and political thinkers to an open society. Gradualism and moderation were the very keystones of the gentle communal paideia. This paideia was preserved by the fact that political mobility was negligible and few newcomers attained political prominence. Those who did passed, over a period of several years, from such minor neighborhood offices as parish wardens or supervisors of the rural constabulary into the councils of the greater guilds. After a protracted apprenticeship they might win a place in one of the larger communal councils where they would vote on a new impost or the ratification of a treaty. At best, only a score or so of new families were selected to the supreme magistracy of the republic, the priorate.[73]

The few who did were, for the most part, offspring of affluent rural families who had occupied, perhaps for a generation or more, critical posts in their native parishes. After serving as tax assessor or supervisor over market tolls, they might represent their home communities as syndics before the Florentine councils. Upon migrating to the city, where they established their fortunes, built their palaces, and contracted marriage

[72] G. Villani, XI, 118. In describing the signory of 1340 he contended that many who were more worthy of a place were declared ineligible. This is not befitting a "buono reggimento di Comune" since no share of offices was bestowed on those *grandi, mezzani,* or *minori* who were men of "sense and virtue."

[73] M. Becker, "An Essay on the 'Novi Cives' and Florentine Politics, 1343–1382," *Mediaeval Studies,* XXIV (1962), 35–42.

alliances with their social superiors, they would advance through the guild hierarchy, sharing the experiences, interests, education, and even the recreation of an older patriciate. In most matters pertaining to the well-being of the polis, the *novi cives* proved anxious to follow the lead of their betters and to perpetuate the casual role of the patriciate. This remained the case until the disasters of the early 1340's. In prosperous times, however, the elite of the guilds, old and new, displayed a marked preference for moderate measures and prudent politics. If the republic was secure and communal credit high, the gentle paideia was bound to prevail. Political mobility was therefore possible over the first four decades of the *trecento,* but it was neither extensive nor disruptive.

Although a few *novi cives* were assimilated into the patriciate, the regime was actually little menaced by pressure from the lower orders. Chroniclers aver that throughout the first four decades of the *trecento, il popolo minuto* had little power and less political energy. The sway of the guild patriciate was almost uncontested except for occasional and isolated outbursts of disaffection by small, obscure groups of artisans and workers.[74] The government dealt in summary fashion with the petitions and pleas of the men of the lower orders. It was not until 1342 that vintners, bakers, butchers, and their impoverished ilk obtained respectful hearings. As for *il popolo minuto,* most of whom were day laborers, their hour was to be brief—the summer of the Ciompi Revolution in 1378. Until the 1340's the most modest requests of the lowly were systematically denied by both communal court and communal council. An Acciaiuoli, Bardi, Della Tosa, or Donati might be pardoned for the most heinous crime, but judge and councilor alike rejected petitions of millers fined for grinding grain poorly or dyers imprisoned for imperfectly working precious cloth. A noble who consorted with the chancellor of an enemy power, scheming to betray the republic, might be absolved by the communal councils, but not so a worker accused of theft by a leather merchant. The fate of a high-born *popolano* who plotted against the government in the *contado* would be a triflng fine; death was the destiny of a laborer who dared to criticize the priorate for its inept handling of the war against Pisa in 1325.[75]

[74] G. Villani, VIII, 8. After the fall of Giano, says the chronicler, "gli artefici e popolani poco potere ebbero al comune che rimase al governo dei popolani grassi e possenti." Dino Compagni, I, 17, makes the same inference. Cf. also N. Rodolico, *op. cit.,* pp. 12–14.

[75] A Strozzi and his retainers initiated a riot against the signory. In the Platea della Signoria they harangued a mob shouting "ad ignem et rumorem et tumultum." For this high crime they received dispensation from the communal councils, upon payment of a paltry twenty-five lire. *GA,* CCXXIII, Part 6, f. 40. Feo della Tosa, high-born

The regime of oligarchs was comfortable and juridically casual. This encouraged a laxity in civic life as well as in the new literature. Perhaps the most pervasive expression of this laxity was the tendency to distinguish between private and public morality. For example, although statutes against prostitution were Draconian, during the twenties and thirties prostitutes were repeatedly liberated on payment of a trifling sum. Even more shocking from the Christian vantage point was the lenient treatment accorded adultresses, abductors, and even rapists. A communal court might declare a sodomite guilty of this most grievous crime—hateful in the sight of man and God—sentence him to be executed by fire and the house where the revolting act took place to be burned to the ground; yet dispensation from the councils would be forthcoming. Thus public law was no less sympathetic to the sodomite than was the pilgrim before the shade of Brunetto Latini. The fusion of Christian compassion and emotional instability meant that the same mob who howled for a prisoner's death would, seeing him led to the place of execution (an isle in the Arno), plead in quavering accents for his release. This instability was partly stimulated by a regime that enacted cruel measures and then let them fall into abeyance. These measures, which might involve matters of no greater consequence than the communal sumptuary laws, would not only be promulgated with all possible pomp and circumstance, but would also be vigorously advocated by such exponents of burgher morality as Giovanni Villani. Were these not the proper Christian remedy against the sin of "vainglory?" Shortly thereafter Villani and his brother Filippo bedecked their wives in the most gaudy attire.[76]

The more secure the sway of the guild elite, the greater the chasm between private and public morality. Statutes against monopoly, usury, and even heresy were little enforced. These crimes were after all mortal, since they put the individual's soul in jeopardy. And yet the treatment, or better

magnate, was condemned by the Florentine court to decapitation for an act of treason on September 20, 1337. He had been convicted of treating with the chancellor of the "tyrant Lord of Verona," Mastino della Scala. Through these clandestine negotiations he sought to disturb the "friendship and alliance" recently consummated between the Arno republic and Venice. Remission was granted by overwhelming vote of the communal councils upon payment of 200 lire for restitution. *Ibid.*, Part 6, f. 48; *ibid.*, Part 1, f. 48. For a very different type of treatment afforded the men of the lower orders, see *ibid.*, CXXII, Part 3, fols. 25, 44.

[76] E. Mehl, *Die Weltanschauung des Giovanni Villani* (Leipzig: 1927), p. 2. Both men were fined for violations by their wives in 1327 under the tenure of the Duke of Calabria. Six years later the same Giovanni, seeking causes for the cataclysmic Arno flood, named "vanagloria delle donne e disordinate spese e ornamenti" as second only to *superbia* and *avarizia*. *Cronica,* XI, 2.

still the nontreatment, of offenders was at best sporadic. In the case of antimonopoly provisions, they were enforced only against the lowly. "Manifest" usurers were little molested by either church or state at this time, notwithstanding public law and the strict provisions of the Bishop's Constitution of 1327. As to the Inquisitor, his principal energies appear to have been expended not in the apprehension of heretics but rather in the extraction of money fines.[77]

This was, then, the apogee of laissez-faire society ruled by a guild patriciate with a penchant for dispensation, remission, and pardon. Venial sins were theoretically reprehensible, and the punishment for mortal sin might best be left to those highest courts who enforce justice in the next world. Certainly this was the secular moral drawn by Marsiglio of Padua in the *Defensor Pacis,* soon to be translated into Italian for the first time by an anonymous Florentine. Possibly the best exemplar of this complex mentality was again the chronicler Giovanni Villani. In theory this devout and loyal son of the church sympathized with the rigors of canon law and the noble objectives of the inquisitor. Acting in concert, the bishop's court and the inquisitorial tribunal might remonstrate against all manner of crime, from blasphemy to witchcraft to heresy. But should the campaign against the sacriligious be translated into action, Villani would raise the loudest cries of civic outrage, contending that the church had overstepped her bounds. The converse was Villani's rage at the commune when a later signory violated what he believed to be "the time-honored liberties of the church." [78]

[77] In addition to the above instances we would also discover that pawnbrokers were granted remission in cases involving conviction on a charge of fraud, that *feneratores* who loaned money for the purpose of gambling also had their condemnations revoked, and even those judged guilty of the most grievous of all Florentine mercantile crimes —bankruptcy—could gain atonement upon payment of as little as fifty lire into the *camera.* Convictions on charges of gambling were also regularly abrogated when the culprit was a Bardi or the scion of another patrician house. *GA.,* CXXII, Part 3, fols. 7–28r; Part 4, fols. 21 ff.; CXXIII, Part 3, fols. 26 ff.; Part 5, fols. 27r. On the reluctance of communal officials to enforce the statutes pertaining to monopolistic practices against the guild patriciate during this period, see M. Becker, "La esecuzione della legislazione contro le pratiche monopolistiche delle arti fiorentine alla metà del secolo quattordicesimo," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* CXVII (1959), 8–16. On the general theme of just price, see R. de Roover, "The Concept of a Just Price: Theory and Economic Policy," *Journal of Economic History,* XVIII (1958), 418–34.

[78] Giovanni Villani does acknowledge that even more severe laws have been made by the King of Spain and the people of Perugia. Nor is there any doubt in his mind that in certain crucial instances the commune has had right on her side. For has not the Tuscan church flouted both "good law and good custom"? Nevertheless, the chronicler judges the statute of April 4–5, 1345, as "a harsh and a cruel law." It had been initiated by an intemperate signory who had forgotten the words of Aristotle's *Politics*—that the rulers of the city must be the wisest and most discreet men. Instead, the "signori" are "artisans, manual laborers, and idiots." It was these men who enacted "immoderate laws not based on reason." Cf. *Cronica,* XII, 43.

Distraints upon nobility and high clergy were, then, not infrequently honored in the breach. Sympathies for these two orders were sometimes vividly expressed. The very popular Sienese artist, Simone Martini, was to depict the life of St. Martin of Tours in frescoes that treat the holy legend not as a moralizing parable but as a chivalric tale. There is exquisite refinement in gesture, pattern, and color. Never is there a hint of preaching or didacticism, only the rhythmic delicacy of manners.[79] The same elegance is expressed by the graceful court of the Virgin Mary in Simone's fresco on the wall of the Palazzo Pubblico painted in 1315. In this Sienese fresco called *The Madonna of Good Counsel,* the didactic element is limited to the most gentle of persuasions. On the steps leading to the Madonna's throne, verses of poetry urge the governors of the city to rule over the town with justice and wisdom. Softly, the Madonna who is patron saint of the town intones these sweet lines: "The angels' flowers, roses, and lilies which adorn the heavenly meadow delight me not more than good counsel." The restraints of society and the obligations of man to polis are spoken in dulcet tones—almost as a hushed act of love. In the early *trecento* the apostle of the communal paideia is the tender Virgin, not the vigorous and harsh Old Testament prophets of the late *trecento* or the David so beloved by civic artists from Donatello to Michelangelo.

With Boccaccio's *Ameto,* we find the restraints of society still further modified. The youthful novelist asserts the almost absolute right of free choice in love. Such a choice is in no way dictated by society but rather by the senses, for beauty leads to the expectation of genuine pleasure. This expectation must prevail against social ties dictated by practical necessity. Specifically, the young Boccaccio vigorously espouses the cause of

[79] E. Borsook, *The Mural Painters of Tuscany* (London: 1960), pp. 133–34, for bibliography on the scenes from The Life of St. Martin of Tours, painted *Ca.* 1320. On The Virgin in Majesty in the Council Hall of the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, painted in 1315, see *ibid.,* 132–33. The rule of the Sienese patriciate during these years much resembles that of their neighboring Florentine confreres. Particularly striking is Ambrogio Lorenzetti's depiction of urban life in *Buon Governo,* in which we find an aristocratic emphasis upon graceful activity, with festive maidens and young gallants on horseback. It might not be gratuitous to compare this idyllic conception of the well-ordered polis with Villani's elegant portrayal of the joyous spring of 1283:

> In this happy and fair state of ease and peaceful quiet so wealth giving to the merchants and artificers, and specially to the Guelfs who ruled the land there was formed . . . a company or band of one thousand men and upwards, all attired in white, with a Lord named the Lord of Love. This band had no other purpose than to pass the time in games and solace, and in dances of ladies, knights, and other people of the city, roaming the town with trumpets and divers instruments of music, and abiding together in banquets at midday and eventide.

The translation of the above passage, along with numerous other quotations of identical aristocratic import, will be found in J. A. Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy* (New York: 1882), IV, Part I, 50–51.

adultery. His advocacy is rendered even more impressive by the biographical technique of referring to the adulteries of "real" women of Florence. Here, and later in the *Decameron,* no moral judgments are made against this means of effecting love's triumph. On the contrary, the author artfully constructs a world in which the reader's sympathies are outraged by those claims of society that would stifle or deny the pleasure of love.[80]

Surely the early writings of Boccaccio call attention to that quality of mind which has been described as the author's "potential anarchism." This attitude is rooted in more than a poet's fancy or a young man's peccadillo. A modest search would disclose the same hostility toward the claims of society in writings of a very different stripe. Even though such writings might not champion "the undeniable claims of nature," they nonetheless make robust defense of the individual against the claims of society. Giovanni Villani, certainly no advocate of adultery, vehemently denounced any efforts by communal courts and magistrates to enforce the law. The folios of his chronicle are replete with denunciations of evil, heartless magistrates who tyrannously persecute citizens whose guilt was not in doubt.

Indeed, if one troubles to examine the judicial records of the activities of these magistrates and rectors, what is unearthed is truly disappointing. They turn out to be as threatening to civic liberty as a traffic judge or a municipal magistrate. Their court decisions are just as pedestrian. The greater part of their work was enforcing communal laws against bearing deadly weapons or overseeing public regulations concerning the curfew. Occasionally the docket was spiced with a violation of ordinances governing the value of a wedding gift the betrothed might send to his fiancée or the number of guests invited to a feast. There was of course more serious work, such as the enforcement of bans against exiles or the collection of delinquent taxes in the *contado.* The chronicler always was likely to pressure the law enforcer to act, and then condemn him when he did.[81]

Nor was this attitude confined to literary men, be they sensitive poet or plodding chronicler. The abundant records of communal council sessions reveal how often potentially anarchical sentiments could and did carry the day. Communal councilors rarely favored strict enforcement of public law except in crisis. Instead they tended to limit or even abolish the

[80] For numerous citations showing Boccaccio's literary attitude, see A. Scaglione, *op. cit.,* pp. 75–82, 180 ff.

[81] Compare G. Villani, XI, 16, 39, with the document contained in *CapP,* XII, fols. 162r–165, where the scope of the magistrate is strictly defined. The *Camera del Comune* indicates the pedestrian roles he fulfilled.

prerogatives of the judiciary. For example, on one occasion when the treasury was much in need of revenue, the councils refused to renew the mandate of the judge charged with supervision of public properties. Even more telling was their action in sumptuary legislation, where Draconian statutes might be promulgated only to be canceled when the councils refused to concur in the appointment of a judicial officer responsible for their enforcement.[82]

Villani and other contemporary commentators on public life seldom tired of devising ringing defenses for the establishment of a polis that would thrive under the sway of law. Yet any attempt to establish this polis, so often described in medieval Aristotelian political tracts with their stress upon stern and sure justice, was manfully resisted by chronicler, philosopher, and statesman. So deep, then, was the commitment to individual freedom that few in government were anxious to close the gap between theory and practice. Political thinkers and citizen politicians were reluctant to effect a lasting reconciliation between public and private morality. Not only did their sympathies cluster about the rights of the well-born and affluent individual, but there was also a strong tendency to look back toward some golden age when the polis was more virtuous. For Dante, for example, such periods of virtue occurred in the rule of early Florentine governments whose authority was weak. The least effectual signory was deemed most noble by the poet.[83]

In order for so casual a regimen to endure, it would be essential that the pluralistic political universe of the late Middle Ages survive without drastic modification. The system of guild immunities, private exemptions, personal privilege, ecclesiastical liberties, corporate prerogatives, and venerable fuedal perquisites must thrive.[84] For such a complex bundle of medieval rights to persist, communal fiscal equilibrium should obtain. Only if there were relative balance between communal income and communal expenditures could this lax tenure possibly survive. If, however, government outlays rose startlingly or if revenues fell dramatically, the system would be eclipsed. Should this inbalance continue, the signory

[82] For numerous illustrations of rejected legislation during these years, see *Libri Fabarum,* Vols. XIII–XVIII.

[83] C. Davis, *op. cit.,* p. 108; *Inferno,* XVI, 73–75, and especially *Paradiso,* XVI, 46–51, 67–68.

[84] For a general discussion of this theme, see M. Becker, "The Republican City State in Florence: An Inquiry into its Origins and Survival (1280–1434)," *Speculum,* XXXV (1960), 39–50. For an analysis of comparable developments in a nearby Tuscan town, see D. Herlihy, *Pisa in the Early Renaissance* (New Haven: 1958), pp. 54–68. For additional bibliography, see F. Catalano, "Rassegna di studi sul comune," *Belfagor,* VIII (1953), 446–65.

would find it difficult to be tolerant of these antique rights. Therefore, gradually, commencing with the crises of the early 1340's, Tuscan church, religious confraternity, pious foundation, *Parte Guelfa,* guild—all were gathered under the aegis of public law. Communal politics was altered beyond recognition and the communal paideia lost past recall. It is well, too, to remember that with mounting budgets, fiscal contributions by these quasi-public bodies would be of small consequence to the treasury and that therefore their power would erode.

When equilibrium did obtain, a myriad of Christian imperatives buttressed the communal paideia. In the late medieval world, great faith was placed in voluntary association as an almost sacrosanct means for achieving ethical ends. Thus the north Italy of the *dugento* was the spawning ground of innumerable pious societies of men sworn to bring mankind "that joy which passeth understanding—peace." [85] It is not surprising, therefore, to discover that the startlingly original early *trecento* political writer—Ptolemy of Lucca, an author to whom Dante's *Monarchia* is much indebted—made the daring statement that *zelus patriae* has its roots in that most Christian of all virtues—*caritas*. No political thinker of the period espouses the communal point of view with more insight than this continuator of Aquinas' *De regimine principum*. Using substantially the same arguments as St. Thomas, he supports his deeply felt commitment to communal republicanism. For this, he contends, is the ideal form of government rather than the monarchy so rigorously upheld by St. Thomas. True, he is continuing a tradition begun by Latini in his *Tesors,* but his is a much more systematic presentation. Moreover, he has taken the hopeful answer Aquinas rendered to the question of "whether *caritas* is capable of infinite increase" and stressed not the equation between infinite charity and the Holy Spirit but the more mundane aspects of charity. Ptolemy's concern is less with the transcendental community than with the terrestrial polis. As in the famous civic frescoes of Tuscany, *caritas* had come to personify man's love of man (*amor proximi*). Even the love of *patria* so ennobled by the pagan Romans had its origins in *caritas*.[86]

The most imposing expression of this secularized Christian paideia are

[85] For the many useful references to St. Thomas' and St. Augustine's concepts of peace, see *Basic Writings of St. Thomas,* ed. A. Pegis (New York: 1945), p. 1154. Cf. also Gregory the Great, *Moralia,* IV, 26; Dante, *Monarchia,* I, IX. On religious confraternities and their objectives in Tuscany, G. Monti, *Le confraternite medievali dell'alta e media Italia* (Venice: 1927), I, 147–201.

[86] H. T. Silverstein, "On the Genesis of *De Monarchia* II, v," *op. cit.,* 326–49; M. Grabmann, *Mittelalterliches Geistesleben* (Munich: 1926), pp. 354–60. Georges de Lagard speaks of Ptolemy as being the one who "cherche à justifier à fois la vie corporative des cités italiennes et l'autorité persistante des hiérarchies féodales. . . . Cf. *La naissance de l'esprit laïque au déclin du moyen âge* (Louvain: 1958), p. 119.

the frescoes of *Good and Bad Government* by Ambrogio Lorenzetti. Painted between 1337 and 1340 on the walls of the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, they embody virtually the entire Christian Aristotelian paideia. Nicola Pisano's pulpit in Pisa had already represented *amor proximi* by a woman caring for a child. Lorenzetti shows bad government in the person of Cruelty choking that child. Both Giotto and the followers of Pisano responded to the same hopeful impulse when they emphasized the human potential for loving one's fellow man.[87]

The poetry of Dante is as replete with veneration for *caritas* as is the art of Giotto. The deepest isolation of the creatures of the *Inferno* stems from their inability to establish the bonds of charity between self and others. It is only as the pilgrim ascends to *Purgatorio* that he first encounters this glorious Christian virtue, next only to faith and love in redeeming force. Surely the despair of the damned is intimately connected with their incapacity for love.

As a counterpart to the damned in the world of Dante and Giotto, there is the central motif of the Vergilian epic: the idea that man should pursue a definite, sacred mission. In the "Fifth Epistle," Emperor Henry VII becomes a latter-day Aeneas, and his Vergil, Dante, tells him that "Romanorum imperium de fonte nascitur pietatis." To Giotto, the Inferno is a place of disorder where the damned have lost, in Dantean terms, "the well-being of the intellect," and the truly pious are senatorial apostles moving in a numinal world. It is in this world that poet and painter give human actions and feelings eternal dignity. The creator of the early *trecento* depicted the timeless correspondence between actual events and moral ideals.[88]

By the 1330's there was a daring secular trend at work. Perhaps it was in

[87] M. Meiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 51–61. Commencing with Nicola Pisano, the woman personifying *carità* (love of man—*amor proximi*) is accompanied by a nude child instead of a beggar, as in earlier French sculpture. In Lorenzetti's *Buon Governo* the figure representing the commune is regal and clad in splendid robes, with *carità* hovering directly above his head. Such a personification indicates that this is indeed the highest of all civic virtues. Cf. G. Rowley, *Ambrogio Lorenzetti* (Princeton: 1958), Vol. 2, Plate 155. For a discussion of the transvaluation of the theological conception of charity in thirteenth-century thought, until it came to mean the union of love of God and of neighbor, see E. Wind, "Charity, The Case History of a Pattern," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* I (1937–38), 322–24. Giotto's depiction of *carità* in the Arena Chapel owes much to St. Thomas. With Dante the beauty of Beatrice produces in noble hearts the supreme Christian virtue of humility. In the *Vita Nuova* we witness a complete identification of love with Christian charity. Dante's *Donna angelicata* is the product of the perfect fusion of chivalric and Christian ideals and thus expresses the hopeful ethos of this period. Cf. J. C. Nelson, *Renaissance Theory of Love* (New York: 1958), pp. 17–18.

[88] Dante, *Epistolae,* V. 49–51; J. Balogh, "Rerum Dominis Pietas Semper Amica," *Speculum,* IV (1929), 323–24.

part inspired by the untroubled conscience of a self-confident patriciate. The two leading artists of the Arno republic were breaking with Giotto's metaphysical commitment to ideal space. For the master, no matter how human the thought or the deed, its expression or performance must take place in an "ideal space far removed from the spectator."[89] His foremost pupil, Taddeo Gaddi, and the other leading artist of Florence, Maso di Banco, responded to quite different imperatives. No longer did they situate the human act in ideal space far removed from the spectator. Instead they experimented boldly with pictorial illusion as a means for bringing the spectator into intimate contact with the world depicted in the fresco. In Gaddi's refractory scheme of about 1335, not only is there a mural within a mural, but the scene of the Last Supper is painted life-size, with both space and structure corresponding exactly to a convent dining room.[90]

## VI

Perhaps the greatest single testimony to the *hubris* of this Saturnian age is the Maso di Banco tomb painting done for the Bardi at about the same time (1335). In this work in the chapel at Santa Croce, Messer Bardi rises confidently from his marble tomb to meet his God. As E. Borsook has noted, "The whole arrangement is like a private Last Judgment, with Signor Bardi painted on the same scale as the angels above him." Such *superbia* was soon to be undone by a series of disasters that might provide material for allegory, not only to the medieval but even for the present day. Just five years later, the great feudal properties of the Bardi of Vernio, patrons of the chapel at Santa Croce, were commandeered by the republic. In 1339 Edward III of England had defaulted on his enormous debts to the house of Bardi. In November of the following year, leading scions of the family revolted against the signory and were banished. Ensuing bankruptcy and condemnations for criminous acts from 1344 to 1345 might move a *trecento* social historian to comparison with images and symbols from the Book of Job. That this ancient paradigm of suffering and sorrows should be the subject of at least three important art works commissioned

[89] Cf. M. Dvorák, *Geschichte der Italienischen Kunst* (Munich: 1927), I, 20–21, where he speaks of Giotto's "Idealstil" in a chapter aptly titled "Das Neue Evangelium." Georg Weise considers the Gothic as a synthesis of "Natur-bejahung" and "Transzendentalität." See especially "Der doppelte Bergriff der Renaissance," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaftt und Geistesgeschichte,* XI (1933), 506–7.

[90] Moreover, in the 1330's we witness the use of realistic light effects in order to increase the illusion of spacial depth. E. Borsook, *op. cit.,* pp. 15 ff.

in the 1350's and 1360's in Tuscany was not a matter of coincidence. Perhaps Taddeo Gaddi began the Job cycle at the Camposanto in Pisa shortly after the mid-*trecento*. It seems a bit of poetic justice: the triptych in Santa Croce, home of the Bardi chapel, painted by a follower of Nardo di Cione, depicts Job standing as a cult figure to the left of the Virgin, and the whole predella tells of his misfortunes.[91]

The rash of business failures, forestalled only temporarily in 1340 by the political maneuvering of the patriciate, was in the now-pessimistic opinion of Giovanni Villani "the greatest ruin and defeat that ever our commune suffered."[92] The bankruptcies were the resultant of a moral defect, said the conscience-stricken chronicler. They were no mere matter of lack of business acumen, but rather a punishment for the deadly sin of "avarizia di guadagnare." So intense was Villani's own sense of guilt, that this one-time partner in the house of Peruzzi and now *socius* in the Buonaccorsi company had a lifetime of business activities undone by a resurrected Christian *Angst*. Indeed his guilt acquired such magnitude that it began to destroy his faith in *trecento* capitalism. The once-heroic "Christian pilgrims"—the Accaiauoli, Bardi, Peruzzi, etc.—who stood resplendent and pure in the early pages of his narrative became the self-seeking villains of the piece whose desire for "sudden gain" caused them first to bankrupt their city and then turn it over to an evil despot. So vile are the city's leading families and so corrupt, that the chronicler will not even record the names of those who served on the *balia* of 1340 (The Twenty).[93]

The former easy confidence displayed by Guido Cavalcanti or revealed in a poem generally attributed to Giotto, that poverty was not conducive to virtue any more than wealth to vice, was threatened by the disasters of the early forties. Always lurking under the patina of communal paideia were the antithetical impulses that idealism had momentarily set to rest. The Bardi, Peruzzi, and their ilk were now the *prestatori* who loaned at usury, covetous only of "sudden gains."[94]

If faith in Christian pilgrims had ebbed, so, too, had the pervasive, genial sense of community expressed in the belief that both the newcomer and the patrician were capable of being educated in civic virtue. Francesco da Barberino, whose career spanned the century between the mid-*dugento*

[91] M. Meiss, *op. cit.*, p. 68.
[92] *Cronica*, XII, 55: "Maggiore ruina e sconfitta che nulla che mai avesse il nostro commune."
[93] G. Villani, XI, 130.
[94] *Ibid.*, XII, 55.

and the mid-*trecento*, is perhaps the finest exemplar of that confidence. You will recall that it was he who first used Hercules as a symbol for man's ability to choose wisely between good and evil. Almost his entire literary career was dedicated to the education of the *novi cives* in *urbanitas* and civic responsibility. At the end of his days, according to his first biographer, the son of Villani's brother and a near contemporary, Francesco was discredited. The events of the 1340's had overtaken this communal optimist, and it had become apparent that the "rudes" were uneducable. Nor was this tragic conclusion an isolated phenomenon. Every chronicler of the mid-*trecento* tried to outdo his peers in the art of diatribe and invective. Not only did they depict the newcomers as inaccessible to *virtù*, but commencing with Giovanni Villani, these *novi cives* became objects for ridicule and scorn. At their feet was laid all responsibility for the political misfortunes of the Arno republic.[95] In a moment of resignation, while discussing the events of May, 1345, Villani muses in an unaccustomed philosophical vein that after all one should expect only the worst from *il popolo*. Had they not been responsible for the vile treatment of the leader Giano della Bella and the exile of the almost divine Dante? Had not all of history demonstrated that there is no limit to the ingratitude of the masses? The chronicles of "our fathers the Romans" contain shocking examples of ingratitude. Did not Scipio and "that valiant and noble Julius Caesar" fall victim to the caprice of *il popolo*? No virtuous citizen, writes Villani somberly, can expect gratitude from the republic and from *il popolo*, as ancient and modern examples show: envy and pride always vanquish magnanimity and liberality.[96] We have reached the opposite pole of the communal paideia with its faith that the burgher ethic could be informed by chivalric virtues.

The chronicler Stefani, treating these same years, goes yet a step farther than the disillusioned Villani: How can one expect more from *il popolo* when in fact they are the descendants of the mob that crucified the Lord Christ, Our Saviour? [97] In his last years Simone Martini seems to have entertained the same disquieting thoughts. His *Madonna of the Good Counsel* (1315) was the perfect embodiment of the gentle admonitory

[95] *Ibid.*, XII, 44.; G. Brucker and M. Becker, "The *Arti Minori* in Florentine Politics, 1342–1378," *Mediaeval Studies*, XVIII (1956), 93–99. Gino Scaramella in his incisive monograph *Firenze allo scoppio del tumulto dei Ciompi* (Pisa: 1914) furnishes numerous citations of materials on the hostility of older families towards new clans. He does not, however, draw the chronological inference that all his evidence postdates 1343.
[96] *Cronica*, XII, 43–44.
[97] Stefani, rub. 564.

communal paideia, and his fresco depicting the *condottiere* Guidoriccio da Fogliano (1328) presented the happy equilibrium between knightly pomp and civic virtue. The elaborately caparisoned steed bearing the subduer of rebel towns was a chivalric panegyric to public idealism. Was not his most notable work, the *Annunciation* (1333), now in Florence's Uffizi, a paean to the elegant ideal of aristocratic beauty? How different are these from his last works. In the *Holy Family* he suggests a worldly elegance bereft of spirituality, and in his *Way to Calvary* panel, now in the Louvre, we see a mob mocking the Saviour in his moment of anguish. In this last work the persona of *il popolo* has sunk below mockery or malice and descended to the bestial.

Again it should be acknowledged that the hopeful paideia of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries contained strains of terrible realism. If Dante was the most fervent exponent of man's capacity to learn virtue and the staunchest upholder of the Aristotelian-Thomistic definition of man as a political animal, he was likewise the bravest depicter of horror and bestiality. Few pilgrims have ever met so many men whose capacity for the antisocial was as monumental. Only one contemporary political character was to join the blessed company of the *Paradiso*—the feckless and unfortunate Henry VII, who came before Italy was ready for its saviour.

Thus Dante's belief in man's potential did not blind him to the ruthless, destructive force of the uninformed ego. Yet his perception of that force was colored by the gentle paideia. For Dante the most bestial, the most depraved, of human acts represent a failure of love. In this the most influential of all Florentine preachers, Domenico Cavalca (*ca.* 1270–1342), would have concurred. Never is the knowledge of man's capacity for the "mala vita" suppressed. But the remedy is always at hand and always certain. As the Italian literary historian, De Sanctis, put it: "Cavalca's muse is love, and his material is Paradise, of which we get a foretaste in that spirit of charity and gentleness which gives his prose so much softness and color." [98]

[98] F. De Sanctis, *History of Italian Literature* (New York: 1951), I, 123. Of Cavalca's *Vitae* (lives of the saints), De Sanctis observes: "Their concept is no longer a theological and moral abstraction, but has become flesh, has a moral and earthly life." This telling comment calls to mind Auerbach's conviction that Dante was the first poet since antiquity to make man's character his destiny. Also, Cavalca's writings share Giotto's passion for that architectonic simplicity that focuses attention upon the psychic state of the figure. Particularly relevant is that combination of psychological understanding and concern for the civic persona found in Cavalca's *Medicina del cuore, ovvero trattato della pazienza* (Rome: 1756), pp. 81–95.

# VII

How different are the pronouncements of the leading preachers of the late thirties until the mid-fifties. Bound on the one hand by the stern injunctions of the Augustinian preacher, Fra Simone Fidati (d. 1348) and on the other by the terrible prophecies of the Dominican Iacopo Passavanti, we observe the failure of love as a redemptive or even regenerative agent. In Fidati's *La vita cristiana* there is already ample evidence of a distrust of love in all its human manifestations. The ascetic norm must be adhered to even in relations between husband and wife: "Married couples should not touch one another, neither seductively nor playfully, because this puts the fire of desire in their flesh," writes Fidati, and goes on to deny that Christ's delivery required a midwife. Millard Meiss, in his recent study of Florentine painting, sees Fidati's views as opposing "the growth of naturalism in art," so pervasive in Florence in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.[99] Convincingly Meiss demonstrates that the Augustinian's moral injunctions dissuaded eminent artists such as Taddeo Gaddi and Bernardo Daddi from joining their holy figures together in acts of love and tender affection. *Caritas* and *amore* recede; figures are more and more wrapt, uncommunicative, and withdrawn. The feeling of isolation has replaced the sense of community; there is a terrible chasm between man and man and a veritable abyss between man and God.

Passavanti's sermons of 1354, soon to be the stuff of his treatise *Lo Specchio di Vera Penitenza,* have been most aptly compared with the earlier pronouncements of the loving and tender Cavalca: "But Passavanti's muse is terror, and his material is vice and hell, pictured less from their grotesque and mythological sides than in their human aspects, as in remorse and the cry of conscience."[100] Long before, in the writings of the mystic Jacopone da Todi (1230–1306), there had been an anguished celebration of the miseries flesh is heir to, but the world did not end in "a black eternal night" nor was it seen as an "opera malvagia." Most crucial

[99] M. Meiss, *op. cit.,* p. 26; A. Levasti, *Mistici del duecento e del trecento* (Milan: 1960), pp. 607–80.

[100] F. De Sanctis, *op. cit.,* p. 123. For the text of "Lo specchio della vera penitenza," see A. Levasti, *op. cit.,* pp. 683–746. This most influential work of the 1350's commences with a quotation from St. Jerome: "Peonitentia est secunda tabula post naufragium." The metaphor to set the tone for the plight of mankind is, then, a sinking ship. If we compare the sermons of this most popular preacher of his day with his early *trecento* counterpart, Fra Giordano da Rivalto, then we see in the sermons of the latter, delivered in Florence in 1304, those figures of speech meant to evoke in the congregation the will toward good works and the "holy life," rather than "repentance" and "self-castigation." Cf. *Prosatori minori del trecento,* ed. D. de Luca (Naples: no date), pp. 9–28.

for the preservation of this earlier paideia was the possibility of interior equilibrium. Corruption and destruction resulted from "original sin"; certain it was that the flesh would reject the divine that only the spirit could aspire to, but at a certain moment in the future, the flesh and the spirit would be reconciled and within us all *L'Amore* would be born.[101]

We are of course reminded by St. Francis' *Cantico delle Creature* and the eighth chapter of the *Fioretti* of the pervasive commitment of late *dugento* and early *trecento* painting to the notion that the individual, despite *il peccato originale,* can achieve a victory over self. To Cavalca the only conquest worthy of note is this interior triumph. Since the flesh and worldly desires create a tempest in the mind, one must seek "quiete"; only then can one develop that "franco amore" which renders the self whole. Cavalca's teacher, Giordano da Rivalto (1260–1311), adds another hopeful dimension. Not only does love furnish us with the only alternative to our own frailty, but his *Prediche* are masterpieces in instructing an audience as to the frailty of humankind. Indeed, even the saints are imperfect; all doubt and no one knows how we shall end.[102]

One can argue, and indeed it has been done so effectively by Millard Meiss, that the art of Orcagna in the mid-*trecento* is the visual equivalent of Passavanti's moral treatises of terror. But here I would suggest that the comparison must be qualified according to what Ernst Cassirer described as the logic of *Kulturwissenschaften,* which expresses "a unity of direction, not a unity of actualization (or of actual *particulars*)."[103] If we seek the locus of the turning point in "a unity of direction," it might well be in the person of the preacher Simone Fidati. Beginning in the late thirties and early forties, his notions become part of the new stern paideia. The gap between theory and practice tended to close and Christian stoicism was advocated for all. Art was replete with personages both awkward and consumed by smoldering interior feelings. Much more critical for the erosion of the gentle paideia was Fidati's Old Testament belief that without fear there can be no justice. If the soul desires to sin, it will be necessary for it to crucify itself in fear.[104]

[101] A. Levasti, *op. cit.,* pp. 37–39.

[102] A. Levasti, *op. cit.,* pp. 471–527; for "Prediche," see pp. 58–78.

[103] E. Cassirer, *The Logic of the Humanities,* trans. by C. S. Howe (New Haven: 1961), pp. 139–40, and *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy,* trans. M. Domandi (New York: 1963), pp. VIII–IX.

[104] See A. Levasti's apt summary of Fidati's teachings, *op. cit.,* p. 63: ". . . senza il timore non si può cominciare il bene e condurlo a termine; senza il timore non v'è guistizia. Ogni cosa deve essere fondata in timore, e se l'anima vuol realmente non peccare bisogna che si crocifigga nel timore.

Well before the onset of the Black Death in 1348, then, the gentle paideia was ebbing away. The voices men heard stressed the efficacy of penitence and not of *amore*. In the prologue to the chronicle of Giovanni's brother Matteo he states that as he sits down to write this work he thinks on "the stain of human sin." Mankind in his pessimistic view is subject to all manner of temporal calamities and miseries. Wars, battles, the change of regimes, the establishment of tyrannies, pestilence, fire, starvation, and what he calls the "furore di popoli" are to be understood only in terms of "the divine judgment." In the fourth chapter of the first book he undertakes to demonstrate that men learn nothing from adversity. *Il popolo* of Florence were worse after the plague than before: they did not want to work or follow their usual metiers. They dressed in the robes of the deceased, took over their property, and all that concerned them was riotous living and pomp. What then is the purpose of this manifestation of "il divino giudicio"? There is only one answer: man's capacity for evil is boundless. Were it not for the memory of adversity, he would be still more vile.[105]

By the early forties the equilibrium so essential for the durability of the gentle paideia was disturbed. The balance between the commitment on the one hand to man as a "social animal" and on the other to man the aggressive and ruthless was spoiled. Surely the great intellectual delight of Tuscan medieval writers in the play of antitheses was the dominant motif from the mid-thirteenth-century stylists Guittone d'Arezzo and Brunetto Latini through the young Boccaccio. The exquisite play of rhetorical opposition that took form not only in the *quaestio* of the scholastic but in the perennial contrast of opposites—not birth but the heart, not power but virtue, not wealth but interior nobility, not sense but spirit—this is the stuff of Tuscans concerned with existential problems. The dichotomy is between light and shadow, being and nothingness. A tension is set up which spawns both the figures of speech and the very syntax of Tuscan dialect.[106]

It is the capacity to survive and even create with these antitheses that reveals the robustness of secular philosophy and art. Despite the ambiguities of the human situation, chronicler, poet, preacher, and political

[105] Cf. M. Villani, I, 57; II, 1. Contrast this with the boundless civic hopefulness of his brother's chronicle begun in the year 1300. G. Villani, VIII, 36; I, 1.

[106] C. Segre, "La sintassi del periodo nei primi prosatori italiani," *Memoria Academia Nazionale dei Lincei*, Ser. VIII, Vol. 4, II (Rome: 1952), 39–193; M. Corti, "Le fonti del fiore di virtù," *op. cit.*, 60–82.

thinker opted for the possibility of individual *renovatio*. If the locus of evil was in man, so, too, was the locus of good. To Giotto, Hell was merely a place of disorder, and his "conception of the human being as the source and the emblem of moral and aesthetic values" caused him to render the human figure with "a minature-like unreality" when he was forced to place him in the Inferno.[107] Similarly, he is most reluctant to cast down even if the purpose is both didactic and aesthetic. In depicting the triumph of the virtues over the vices, he does not use the traditional personifications of the latter, but rather he employs only symbols. So that we have no human figures trampled shamefully under foot, Charity stomps on bags of grain and money signifying avarice, and Faith crushes pagan scripts and holds an idol under her cross. How different are the representations of the triumph of virtues over vice after the mid-years of the *trecento:* Pride, Avarice, and Vainglory are no longer represented symbolically but are realistically depicted men and women suffering pain and ignomy.

## VIII

If this turning point is somewhat symbolically rendered, then we must take into consideration the myriad of pressures—social, economic, and political—that prompted the shift of the center of moral gravity from the individual to society. We must reckon with not only the failure of the gentle paideia but with the emergence of a sterner set of ideals. This new cluster of values which comes to the fore in the early 1340's bespeaks the rule of law and the concomitant triumph of more impersonal forms of government. The narrowing of the gap between theory and practice was contemporaneous with the onset of Florentine puritanism.

The hopeful period of Arno medieval history dimmed under the impact of tragedies domestic and foreign. Patrician leadership could not summon the resources of civic spirit to light the sky again. Instead, moral impulse was silted by the lethargic, brackish waters of custom. Budgetary demands could not be met without sacrifice. The hortatory and the admonitory gave way to the coercive and the punitive. By 1343 the once-hopeful Giovanni Villani was in the doldrums of political nihilism, and thereafter not a single Florentine chronicler contended that the best of bourgeois virtue could be wedded to the teachings of chivalry. In fact, with Matteo

[107] M. Meiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 50–51; C. Gnudi, *Giotto* (Milan: 1958), pp. 164–166 and plates 124, 127, 128.

Villani the Florentine *magnates* and *potentes* became the betrayers of all that is valuable in the communal paideia.[108]

Two persistent forces served to propel the sterner paideia: first, the insistent claims of a mounting public budget which played havoc with traditional immunities, ecclesiastical liberties, and guild prerogatives—the very stuff of the laissez-faire medieval rule—and second, the coming to political influence of large numbers of *novi cives* in 1343. As we shall see, this latter event heralded the democratization of Florentine life so essential for the new rule of law. There were also the beginnings of a shift from private, multiple medieval economies to the public capitalism of the territorial state with the onset of the rising communal debt.

Perhaps these grave matters can be alluded to only by literary analogy. If Boccaccio's early writings through the *Decameron* stand as exemplars of a literature focused on the rights of the individual in conflict with the claims of society, then Franco Sacchetti's *Three Hundred Tales,* the most popular work of its kind in the second half of the *trecento,* is the model of a literature that incessantly pays homage to the bonds of that society. In the earlier world one must satisfy the claims of nature through the play of wit. Chivalric daring is coupled with burgher cunning. Sacchetti, however, has wit teach how to stifle or control the claims of nature. The mechanism clearly involves repression, and the by-product is a smoldering interior life undetectable from individual actions. The keystone of wisdom is never to respond to provocation. Wit is too dangerous since it only provokes society to take reprisal. In the democratized polis, any display of intellectual superiority needs be suspect. Society, the commune, law, have all become sacrosanct. Neither Sacchetti nor any other major writer believed in that gentle paideia of easier days.[109]

[108] Cf. passages cited previously but most especially M. Villani, IX, 24, in which it was the concerted action of the "cittadini mercanti et artefici" and those of "mezzano stato" that saved the "onore e bene del comune" in 1359, when the selfish "grandi e potenti" were seeking to betray it. This commitment to the political virtue of the "mercatores," coupled with a hearty distrust of the nobility, became imbedded in humanistic Florentine historiography with the advent of Coluccio Salutati to the chancellory of the republic in 1375. E. Garin, "I cancellieri umanisti della Repubblica Fiorentina da Coluccio Salutati a Bartolomeo Scala," *Revista Storica Italiana,* LXXI (1959), 195–199.

[109] We observe the moral, even puritanical, tone of this most popular of all late *trecento* collections of tales. Sermons are appended to better than half these stories. Not infrequently, Sacchetti narrates only to have the opportunity to moralize. Seldom does the author feel free enough to relate a story that is purely amusing. More relevant, however, is the fact that his characters move in a milieu in which the individual must contain himself in the face of the collectivity. One can never be too careful: self-containment is the key to survival, if not to success.

The new idealism placed little stress upon the effective force of love. Just as in later theology penitence and not *amore* and *caritas* were the prescription, so, too, in politics the stern paideia emphasized coercion and force. In 1343 for the first time the signory assumed the role of compelling magnates to abide by the norms of law. The high clergy, the *Parte Guelfa,* the religious confraternities, even the guilds, were brought under the purview of public jurisdiction. Dissipated was the confidence that example and discourse could achieve the *renovatio* of individual or corporate body. Instead, faith was lodged in the *auctoritas* of the collectivity. Looking back from the vantage point of the late *trecento,* the diarist Giovanni Morelli reminisced that in the old days men settled their quarrels with the sword, now it is done by vote of the communal councils.[110]

By the mid-fourteenth century, the depiction of the historical process had become more abstract. Gone were the flawed heroes of Dino Compagni, the early Giovanni Villani, or Dante. Neither chronicles nor political poems were peopled with the Giano della Bellas or the Corso Donatis of yesteryear; instead, virtue or vice was discerned in the motion of society itself. History instructed Matteo Villani that the *novi cives* might inadvertently serve as saviors of the state. In fact, what was noteworthy was that such religious metaphors were now employed by those addressing the signory. Franco Sacchetti, the author of the *Three Hundred Tales,* composed poetry comparing the labors of Hercules to the glorious victories of Florence over her adversaries. Soon the City of the Baptist was depicted in the sanctimonious guise of "salvator Mundi."[111]

The image of Hercules was transvalued. It once symbolized man capable of choosing between good and evil. Soon it became the symbol for the benevolent, wise, and far-seeing state. With chroniclers like Stefani the commune is good and the individual citizen evil; the higher up on the social scale, the more probable his selfishness and political knavery. By the mid-1350's the once-glorious Guelf party and the venerable Tuscan church were cast in the role of villain. The potentates of the feudal world would only betray the republic if afforded the inglorious opportunity.[112]

[110] Giovanni di Pagnola Morelli, *op. cit.,* p. 131.

[111] *Il libro delle rime,* ed. A. Chiari (Bari: 1936), p. 210; F. Sacchetti's *Sermoni Evangelici,* ed. O. Gigli (Florence: 1857), p. 111.

[112] We discover that after the 1330's the literature and the arts show less and less interest in the aristocracy, and the ingredient that comes to be lacking is the ceremonial and the poetic. Again Sacchetti's *Three Hundred Tales* loom as a compelling example. These motifs, traditional in the literature of chivalry, tend to be less frequently entertained. The celebration of feats of arms, the abundance of wealth, and deeds of love are increasingly rare after the 1340's.

Essentially a nexus had been severed which can only be hinted at. It involved the sometimes tenuous, always hopeful, connection between the individual and the pluralistic world of the later Middle Ages. Empire, church, guild, Guelf party, religious confraternity, had all conspired in a gentle and sometimes awkward fashion to bestow identity on the inhabitant of the polis. With the advent of the 1340's, however, this system began to erode. The bonds of society emanating from the polis itself would loom as more formidable. An entity that might be described as the territorial state was becoming the object of awe and respect. The center of moral gravity was to shift until the spokesmen for the new paideia were to be the champions of law and order—the voices for repression. A new cluster of ideas was to be advanced that would stress subordination of self to the imperatives of society. One would gain identity to the extent that his actions reinforced the social bonds.

# EXPERIMENTS IN POPULAR GOVERNMENT AND DICTATORSHIP TO 1328

# II

In order for this relaxed society with its many immunities and privileges to sustain itself, it would be necessary for the economy, both private and public, to retain its traditional form and its accustomed vitality. Only if these conditions were met could the government and the courts afford to entertain such exquisite sympathies for privileged individuals and institutions. At the first sign of economic crisis in public finances, there were rumblings against the inordinate power of the guild elite, followed by a demand for stricter enforcement of communal law. Such enforcement was a profitable business, and it was hoped that fines and condemnations might help to alleviate the depressed public fisc.

Especially persistent was the cry against those who, because of their political influence and prestige, had avoided paying their just share of communal imposts. Advisers to the government contended that patricians who held communal property while making only minimal payments into the treasury should be compelled to render fair rents.[1] Even more vociferous were the diatribes against high-born magnates and *popolani* who had usurped the properties of the commonwealth. Hundreds of scions of great houses had simply neglected to pay back taxes, and their obligations might run in arrears two or even three decades.

The boundary line between private and public rights had become something of a twilight zone, so that the distinction between the influence of the great families and the authority of the commune was at best a shadow line. The withering away of public power was especially pronounced during intervals of oligarchical hegemony. This process contributed to the formation of a type of rule which might best be classified

[1] Cf. *LF*, XIV, f. 51 (Feb. 1, 1330); XIV, f. 17 (Aug. 9, 1330). Cf. also XVIII, f. 55; XV, f. 78.

as "personal government."[2] A personal regimen was possible while communal budgets were minimal and the many organizations serving as focuses of patrician power could provide the modest amounts of revenue required.

A loan from the Guelf party, a benevolence from the Tuscan clergy, or an advance from the treasury of one of the major guilds could and did permit the commune to meet its most pressing commitments. Much more significant, however, were the many voluntary loans (at from 10 to 15 per cent interest) made by the city's first families to tide the beleaguered treasury over its tense days.

Thus personal government could prosper only as long as the ruling families were willing and able to underwrite the republic's obligations either from their own patrimony or from the treasuries of their elitist organizations. In fact, if one analyzes the lists of names of the creditor class of the republic prior to 1343, one finds that they were also the commune's ruling class. It was exactly these first families who were able to furnish the capital required by the polis.

It is not suggested that the Acciaiuoli, Bardi, Del Bene, Peruzzi, and Strozzi held tranquil sway; there were in fact periodic depressions, internal crises, and political disturbances. The requirements of protracted warfare or of a costly alliance system put an almost intolerable strain upon the resources of the public fisc. For short intervals it might be necessary to wrest treasured privileges, immunities, and liberties from the guild patriciate to obtain revenues or achieve long-range objectives in foreign policy. But the basic public fiscal structure was not altered beyond repair until the decade of the 1340's. Until then the patriciate creditor class, though temporarily out of power, could and did recoup its position and its prestige. Only in the middle years of the fourteenth century, when, under the stress of endemic crisis, communal budgets began to soar, was it necessary to curtail ancient privilege and to expand the creditor class. Then large numbers of new citizens entered the republic's political arena and there ensued a transvaluation of politics and culture. The old personal forms gave way to a polis under law administered with an impersonality less solicitous of antique privilege.[3]

[2] Cf. M. Becker, "The Republican City State in Florence: An Inquiry into its Origins and Survival (1280–1434)," *Speculum*, XXXV (1960), 39–50.

[3] Niccolo Machiavelli, still the most incisive student of Florentine history, makes some telling observations on this theme in narrating the events of the mid-*trecento:* "And as the citizens, since the ruin of the nobility, were on such an equality that the magistrates were more respected now than they had previously been, they designed to proceed towards the suppression of this disorder with civil authority alone." Cf. his *History of Florence,* with an introduction by Felix Gilbert (New York: 1960), p. 111.

# I

Until the beginning of the 1340's the main problem was that of coping with short-term crises and sporadic disaffection. Crises were frequently severe and always disquieting, but since they were generally resolved within three or four years, the drain on the public fisc was minimal. There was simply not sufficient or sustained pressure for the systematic abolition of immunities, privileges, liberties, and prerogatives. The claims of society were not exercised against the affluent and well-born except in deep and protracted crisis. The sympathies of the top echelons of the late medieval world were focused upon the individual rather than on the claims of society.

Over the years of the late *dugento* and the first part of the *trecento,* the response to tense, short intervals of crises took one of two forms: the foundation of more broadly based regimes (popular governments) or the installation of a foreign lord (either a despot or a military protector). Each of these responses was an expedient of brief duration, usually initiated as stratagem for preserving patrician patrimony and influence. Once the crisis had subsided, the leading clans again exercised undisputed sway. In effect, caretaker governments were established and given power to confront crisis problems. It was only after 1343 that reassertion of authority by the top echelons came to be effectively challenged.[4]

It should be recognized at the outset that sizable elements in the guild patriciate could be found to advocate strenuously either of these remedies at the appropriate moment. Nor were these seemingly opposed political alternatives without striking similarities. Both types of regimes conducted concerted attacks against the abuses of lax and personal government. Such onslaughts occurred when the public fisc could no longer afford the luxury of a laissez-faire regime. When the crisis was deepest, elements of the patriciate could be relied upon to champion reforms designed to raise needed monies by correcting abuses. There is certainly no simple explanation for the participation of individual Florentines in reform movements that challenged their privileges and immunities. Two facts, however, are noteworthy. First, without their help even more radical taxation measures might have to be enacted, and second, communal

[4] The first scholar to draw attention to the effective challenge by the new men to the political hegemony of the patriciate was Gino Scaramella in his succinct monograph, *Firenze allo scoppio del tumulto dei Ciompi* (Pisa: 1914). He does not, however, make the inference that the year 1343 was critical, despite the fact that the data he has assiduously collected clearly indicate this to be true.

councils were much more willing to vote for provisions intended to effect economies than they were to vote new taxes. Thus a two-thirds majority might entertain a measure to tighten the existing tax structure, recover public propery and rights, and even enforce justice against the overmighty so that the public fisc might gain needed revenue. It was difficult, then, and sometimes impossible, to acquire funds unless the abuses of personal government were curtailed or even eradicated. In addition there was a double dilemma confronting the guild elite. In time of crisis public credit was in jeopardy and they were the principal communal creditors; moreover, they frequently formulated foreign policy and made costly commitments that it was necessary to honor. Some degree of reform was thus in their interest.

There is a further factor difficult to demonstrate yet of much consequence. The more experienced the officeholder, the likelier he was to understand the need for reformation. Stopgap measures and simplistic responses to fiscal dilemma were insufficient and ineffectual. Even if usurpation of substantial tracts of public land was reversed, there still remained a need for additional revenue. As this politically experienced Florentine padded from one communal post to another, he would come to realize that raising the tax on wine a few soldi, or imposing a special levy on Arno fisheries, or even placing an impost on the city's prostitutes—remedies exceedingly popular with the communal council since they involved little sacrifice on the part of the citizens—would contribute little toward the resolution of the fiscal bind.[5]

The officeholder would come to understand that although the plight of the city was not a result of corruption or even extravagance, more strenuous measures were necessary. Since tributary reforms were bound to incur the antipathy of communal councils, extralegal procedures were in order. The most common was a special tributary commission charged with raising revenue. Once its authority expired the same problem would again loom large. Because communal councils were reluctant to grant renewal of authority, politically experienced Florentines might be obli-

[5] As a generalization, clearly statistical in nature, the signory tended to include the most experienced and expert of the *cives*. They proposed bolder remedies than the communal councils were willing to endorse. Therefore they were not infrequently reduced to suggesting tax measures that at best could be expected to yield minute sums. For example, the returns from the tax on weights and measures totaled only 304 lire annually, while the impost on the retail sale of baked goods returned only 1,350 florins a year. Fines on the city's prostitutes were to be paid into a special section of the *camera* charged with the hire of mercenaries. These condemnations amounted to only about 100 florins a month. Cf. *CCE,* XXXIX, f. 101r; *CCE,* LXXI, f. 153r; *CCE,* CLXII, f. 70.

gated to promise that if a new *balia* were authorized it would impose only those levies favored by the councils. Should all stratagems and tactics fail they might propose such extreme remedies as direct imposts on urban real estate and capital. Clearly these were so unpopular that they could be enacted only by a despot; much more palpable was the installation of a popular government.

## II

The popular signory of the late thirteenth century emerged as a response to pressures that had been mounting over the decade of the eighties and were to reach a climax between 1293 and 1295. This ill-starred regime, captained by the courageous though imprudent Giano, scion of an antique clan, the Della Bella, was to give Florentines of Dante's generation a startling experience in the democratization of communal life. This experiment was initiated at a time of great communal fiscal need, and those who sat in this most representative of all the republic's thirteenth-century governments were intent upon revising the existing structure of the tributary system. First, they ended many of the exemptions that had been accorded to certain magnates. Next they introduced similar reforms into the life of the countryside, curtailing the privileges of a large segment of Tuscan rural nobility. An extensive revision of treaties and pacts with these feudatories was undertaken for the purpose of clarifying the nature and extent of their fiscal obligations to the state. Extraordinary commissions were appointed to review earlier grants of immunity and to scrutinize ancient tributary exemptions. Such noble families as the Ricasoli and the Rinaldi lost time-honored fiscal rights, and everywhere there was a tendency to extend "the full jurisdiction" of the commune. This brief interval, then, like later eras of popular rule, was characterized by a strenuous effort to equalize the tax burden.[6]

The regime tightened communal fiscal machinery so that back imposts and unpaid citizen obligations soon were collected quite regularly. No longer could wealthy lords from rural districts make private arrangements with directors and syndics of country parishes whereby they paid trifling sums in lieu of their proper assessments. Further, it became increasingly

[6] B. Barbadoro, *op. cit.*, p. 116; G. Villani, VIII, 2. For an effort to arrive at a pragmatic definition of the term "popular government," see M. Becker, "Some Aspects of Oligarchical, Dictatorial and Popular *Signorie* in Florence," *op. cit.*, 425–29. The events of these years bear a striking resemblance to the rule of *Il Primo Popolo* in Florence from 1250–60. This is a decade I expect to treat in great detail shortly.

difficult for the affluent to enroll themselves in areas of the countryside where the extent of their patrimony remained obscure to tax assessors.[7]

The long war against Arezzo and Pisa (1288–92) had induced a fiscal crisis without winning any substantial advantages for Florence. In June of 1288 the signory was compelled to impose direct levies on urban property. These were assessed first at the scanty rate of 1½ per cent, next at 2 per cent, and finally at 3 per cent. In the following month a "generalis prestantia" (general forced loan) was decreed at 3¾ per cent. By April of the following year the signory doubled this rate. Additional forced loans were exacted with alarming frequency. So great was popular opposition to this lively tax program that in October of 1289 the collection of a general forced loan, assessed on city property at a rate of 5 per cent and on rural patrimony at 3¾ per cent, had to be abandoned.[8] The usual remedy in times of stress had been to borrow substantial sums from the great merchant companies, the guild corporations, the treasury of the Guelf party, and the Tuscan church. In the late thirteenth century, however, these traditional expedients were insufficient to finance military campaigns. The signory was obliged to seek new alternatives; this quest culminated with the levying of special imposts on the guilds and the creation of an intricate system of farming out indirect levies for an optimum yield.[9]

Even so, shortages were bound to occur in wartime. Forces were at work, subtly in the *dugento* and more harshly in the next century, to render a balanced communal budget impossible. Although documentation for the second half of the thirteenth century is scattered, the facts indicate that government outlays were rising. The funds handled by the communal treasurer during March-April of 1240 totaled only 4,310 lire, 17 soldi and 2 denari. While inflation and subsequent alterations in the Florentine monetary system must be taken into account, this is surely a modest sum compared with the funds handled by the treasury in the very early years of the fourteenth century. In May-June of 1301, totals were

[7] N. Ottokar, *Il comune di Firenze,* pp. 173–74; *P,* IV, fols. 97–106.

[8] *Le Consulte,* I, 378 ff., and also B. Barbadoro, *op. cit.,* pp. 70 ff.

[9] N. Ottokar, *op. cit.,* pp. 210–15; R. Davidsohn, *Forschungen,* IV, 392; G. Villani, VII, 131. Quite illustrative of both the reforming zeal and its limits among what Federico Chabod aptly called the "North Italian political aristocracy" of the late Middle Ages is a statement in *Le Consulte,* I, 373, that money must be obtained from holders of communal property, but not from "illi qui habuissent de averi Communis, sine fraude vel militia." This, then, was the rather moderate attitude of the political aristocracy at the height of the crisis induced by the Pisan war in March of 1290. Cf. also F. Chabod, "Y a-t-il un état de la Renaissance?" *Actes du Colloque sur la Renaissance Organisé par la Société d'Histoire Moderne* (Paris: 1958).

130,002 lire, 8 soldi and never fell below 46,869 lire, 6 soldi, 5 denari over the next eighteen years; even this dip was short-lived.[10]

The popular regime of the late *dugento,* like its successors in subsequent periods, responded to escalating costs of government by a more scrupulous program of law enforcement. The ordinances of November, 1294, stand as evidence of this legalistic morality. The objective of the ordinances was to eradicate frauds and abuses still prevalent in the Florentine tributary system. The wealthy (*maxime divites*) were the principal target, and Niccolo Ottokar, the most incisive of modern commentators on this interval of Florentine history, contends that these enactments were rooted in the idea of the supremacy of a "state organism" and designed to curb "egoistic and private interests." Further, he maintains that it was the very inequities and injustices implicit in the tax system that encouraged the support *il popolo* gave to the great popular leader and reformer, Giano della Bella. Especially vehement were the charges launched against the former government officials; their conviction on grounds of favoritism, nepotism, and peculation of communal funds was applauded enthusiastically by *il popolo.*[11]

Coupled with the desire to reform the revenue system was an energetic attempt by the popular regime to make public law prevail. A strenuous effort was initiated to recover usurped communal property and preserve it from future appropriations. The signory enacted stringent measures to protect the public fisc from peculation by its officers. These crucial steps were taken in a civic atmosphere in which popular feeling ran high against the "magnates et potentes," for it held them accountable for the

[10] I wish to thank Professor David Herlihy for the many references he has given me to documents collected among the *Diplomatico* of the Florentine archives pertaining to communal finance in the late *dugento* and early *trecento.* I am now enlarging the documentary base for this key area of public life by including materials from the cartularies of late medieval notaries as well as returns from scattered treasury records. In addition to the materials furnished by Professor Herlihy, it should be added that B. Barbadoro in his very useful study of Florentine public finance provides numerous references and invaluable leads. Cf. also P. Santini, *Documenti dell'antica costituzione del comune di Firenze* (Florence: 1895), p. 475 (Apr. 30, 1240), for an early reference to the condition of the public fisc.

[11] N. Ottokar, *Studi comunali e Fiorentini* (Florence: 1948), p. 87. On the theme of accusations against former governmental officials on charges of peculation, see Dino Compagni, I, 5. Wealthy Florentines attempted to be inscribed in rural parishes or communes where neither they nor the extent of their patrimony were well known. In this way it was hoped their tax assessments might be lowered. The Florentine ordinances of 1287 and 1294 tried to eradicate this commonplace abuse. See N. Ottokar, *Il comune di Firenze,* pp. 173–74; J. Plesner, *op. cit.,* pp. 176–78. For the election of communal accountants and syndics authorized to recover "introitus communis," see *Le Consulte,* I, 336. Shortly thereafter, in the crisis year 1293, the signory elected "officiales ad reinveniendum et recuperandum iura et edificia et plateas communis." Cf. *Ibid.,* pp. 336–76.

bootless recent wars. The program served to weaken the privileged status of many who belonged to the high echelons of Florentine society. The magnates soon found themselves under the strict regimen of the Ordinances of Justice, which singled them out as the least law-abiding. They were required to post bail for continued good behavior. Should they engage in further criminal acts this bail was to be declared forfeit. Furthermore, they were compelled to pay twice the condemnation exacted from any other citizen for a comparable offense.[12] The rights of tower societies—prestigious organizations formed by the high born and the affluent so that they might be secure from the vendetta and free to wage it—were exempted by the government of Giano della Bella. The aristocratic Guelf party, hitherto virtually a law unto itself, now came under closer communal surveillance. Chroniclers opined that if Giano's tenure had lasted longer, it might have lost its exalted position entirely. The prerogatives of certain of the powerful guilds were also challenged, since they were in blatant conflict with the spirit if not the letter of the law.[13]

## III

As long as the fiscal crisis lasted there was a marked tendency to buttress communal machinery and stay the erosion of public rights and civic perquisites. Once the drain of warfare had subsided, however, and relative communal prosperity restored, these efforts abated. Florentine politics until 1343 swung pendulumlike from the impersonal rule of popular government to the relaxed style of the oligarchical signory. During intervals of rule by a despot or military protector, there were manifest many of the characteristics associated with the tenure of impersonal regimes.

This political rhythm was possible before 1343 because the ship of state

[12] If the magnate failed to pay his fine within ten days he was to suffer the amputation of a part of his body. The member chosen was to be determined by gravity of his offense. All the men of the twenty-one legally accredited guilds of the republic were enjoined to close their shops until the harsh sentence was executed. Moreover, a special box was to be affixed to the door of the court of the principal magistrate of the republic where denunciations against magnates could be deposited by the lowly. Cf. G. Salvemini, *Magnati e popolani* (Florence: 1899), pp. 397–404. Cf. also *Diplomatico,* Pasignano (Mar. 20, 1305). Extract from "Liber continens securitates . . . per nobiles et potentes et magnates dicte civitatis et comitatus."

[13] P. Santini, "Società delle torri in Firenze," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* XX (1887), 25–58; 178–204; G. Villani, VIII, 8; Stefani, rub. 204. Threats to the Guelf party also menaced those "grandi e possenti popolani" who were "amici e parenti dei grandi." Cf. the Psuedo-Brunetto in O. Hartwig, *Quellen und Forschungen zur Ältesten Geschichte der Stadt Florenz* (Marburg: 1875), vol. 2, p. 234. On the general theme of relations between signory and Guelf party, see the sketchy work of U. Dorini, *Notizie storiche sull' università di Parte Guelfa in Firenze* (Florence: 1912), p. 14.

lacked the ballast of public debt. This trite metaphor is intended to convey to the reader an image of a vessel tossed by adversity toward Spartan continents or, lulled by prosperity, making for the land of repose and laxity. Once the ballast of communal indebtedness is too heavy the ship will lose mobility. As a matter of fact, after 1343 it took every resource simply to keep the ship afloat. Without respite the winds of adversity howl in the person of the communal creditors for restitution. Despite temporary tacking, the vessel will head for the Spartan continents of impersonal government.

After 1343, then, the commune could no longer afford the luxury of protracted periods of lax rule. The 1320's and 1330's had left a legacy of indebtedness to be managed only with the strictest economies. Unless the public fisc was conserved and communal rights and properties protected from usurpation, even interest payments to state creditors would cease. It is well to observe that after 1343 the principal state creditors were still the same men who staffed the government. There was one radical alteration, however: after that date the creditor class expanded greatly. Influential newcomers to public life were also added to the lists of communal creditors. Over the next two decades the treasury was to borrow from them large sums to be incorporated into the newly funded communal *Monte*. The coffers of the Guelf party, the Tuscan church, the religious confraternities—even the patrimonies of the Acciaiuoli and Bardi—had proved inadequate to underwrite public needs.[14]

After 1295 it was still easy to return to the loose regimen of a permissive oligarchy. Giano della Bella's reforms had antagonized interest groups as varied and as tenacious as the lawyers and butchers. The former objected to the repair of inequities in the legal system—inequities from which they had profited much—while the latter assailed the strict enforcement of communal legislation on price fixing. Restoration of a less ambitious, more personal regime was encouraged by the fact that the

[14] Among the most notable of the *novi cives* creditors were such figures as Giovanni Goggio, a dealer in used clothing; Nerio Lippi, dyer; Niccolo Delli, grocer; Pasquino Telli, blacksmith; Pace Brunetti, leather manufacturer; Tellino Dini, ironmonger, and dozens of others. Their holdings in the funded public debt (*Monte*) ranged from several hundred to several thousand florins. Their maximum contribution was to be made in the mid-*trecento* when the *camera* came to rely upon them especially for short-term loans. Contrast the sizable advances made by the affluent *novi cives* with the picayune sums garnered from the guilds and the Guelf party. Cf. *CCE,* XLVII, fols. 154 ff.; *ibid.,* LIV, *passim; ibid.,* XXII, f. 97; *ibid.,* XXXIV, f. 195. During these years the signory borrowed only 2,000 florins from the major guilds and the trivial sum of 400 florins from the *camera* of the Guelf party. This figure was less than that advanced by a single affluent dyer or leather merchant during the decade of the fifties.

public debt was light and the treasury intake ample. Military outlays remained modest in comparison with the mammouth obligations to be incurred only three decades later.[15] This lent mobility to Florentine politics, for had the republic been confronted with staggering military budgets, a strict regimen, designed to produce revenues, would have been necessary.

Usually income from direct levies on salt, wine, meat, and the customs toll was ample for the conduct of ordinary communal business. Although forced loans were exacted when shortages did develop, restitution was prompt. In 1315 the public debt stood at the trifling figure of 50,000 florins, which represented only one-fifth of the annual income of the city; three decades later it was to increase tenfold.[16] In the golden days of the early *trecento,* merchants and bankers who dominated the signory had overcome the most noble adversary of Florence—Emperor Henry VII. This elite, redolent with prestige, had succeeded in translating their diplomatic and military triumph into a spectacular tributary victory. Only two years after the death of the Emperor, direct taxation on city real estate and capital was abrogated with the cancellation of the *estimo.* This step must indeed have proved popular with urban rate payers, for they were exceedingly reluctant ever to re-enact it. Notwithstanding this cancellation, there was ample revenue. Scattered returns indicated the treasury handled better than 30,000 lire each month until 1318–19. But in the latter year the monthly intake plummeted to almost half.[17]

By the early 1320's costly and futile warfare as well as enemy forays into the Florentine countryside had disturbed the easy tenure by diminishing revenues, and the government was compelled to proclaim a moratorium on all outstanding debts.[18] The effect of this measure was to free

[15] In May of 1302, 500 Florentine horse and 6,000 foot soldiers lay siege to neighboring Pistoia for almost a month, and this operation cost the treasury but 12,093 florins. A few decades later the outlay would have been at least three times this amount. Cf. C. Paoli, "Rendiconto e approvazione di spese occurse nell'esercito fiorentino contro Pistoia." *Archivio Storico Italiano,* VI (1867), 9 ff. The above article is cited by C. Baily in his *War and Society in Renaissance Florence* (Toronto: 1961). This theme is expanded upon in this recent work.

[16] Public indebtedness stood at only 47,275 florins in 1303 and thus the ascent to 1315 was almost imperceptible. For later figures on its astronomical climb, see G. Villani, XI, 90, 130; XII, 3; M. Villani, III, 106; Stefani, rub. 612. A conservative estimate of the debt is 1,500,000 florins by 1364 and almost 2,000,000 in the next decade. Cf. B. Barbadoro, *op. cit.,* p. 630, for assessments of the debt in the early *trecento,* and G. Brucker, *Florentine Politics and Society,* pp. 195 ff.

[17] *Diplomatico,* Cestello (July 24, 1319).

[18] *P,* XVIII, f. 65; R. Palmarocchi, "Contributi allo studio delle fonti statutarie fiorentine," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* LXXXVIII (1930), 68 ff.; G. Salvemini, "Gli statuti fiorentini del capitano e del podesta degli anni 1322-25," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* XVIII (1896), 66 ff.

all funds entering the treasury so that public income might be devoted exclusively to the war against the awesome north Italian lord of Lucca, Castruccio Castracani. Meanwhile, none of the yield from the many indirect imposts would now have to be diverted for the payment of either principal or interest to communal creditors. At the same time private individuals, the great banking houses, the guilds, the Guelf party, and a somewhat recalcitrant Tuscan clergy were summoned to make contributions to the war chest.

## IV

With respect to problems of communal finance, the 1320's remain the least studied among the many neglected decades of the first half of the *trecento*.[19] Yet if one is searching for the temporal locus of the beginnings of the deterioration of the medieval fiscal system, it might be well to examine this interval in some detail. During this decade the public debt became a matter of concern. Only a few years earlier it had stood at that miniscule figure of 50,000 florins; never again was it to be so modest and so manageable.

With the moratorium on communal debts in 1322, there was initiated a brief interval of popular government. As in the past, the democratization of the signory was intimately connected with the pressing need for funds.[20] In many essentials this regime bore a striking resemblance to the signory of Giano della Bella. It also formulated policies designed to encourage stricter fiscal accountability and made strenuous efforts to buttress the force of public law and reform the cumbersome bureaucracy. One of the most remarkable of these innovations was to remain a permanent feature of the Florentine constitutional system. Just prior to the announcement of the moratorium, the office of the Twelve Good Men was founded. These *Duodecim Boni Viri* soon became an indispensable, almost sacred, part of governmental machinery.[21] The supreme magistracy of the city, the priorate, was obligated to hold counsel with the Twelve

[19] Too recently to be incorporated in the present work, David Herlihy published an article, "Direct and Indirect Taxation in Tuscan Urban Finance, Ca. 1200–1400," in *Collection Histoire,* VII (1964), 385–402, in which substantial evidence is presented for increases in communal budgets throughout Tuscany over the *trecento.*

[20] This represented the first substantial modifications of what B. Barbadoro called the translation of political victory into "privilegio tributario" by the grand entrepreneurs of the major guilds in very early *trecento.* Cf. "La condanna di Dante e le fazioni politiche del' suo tempo," in *Studi Danteschi,* ed. M. Barbi (Florence: 1920), pp. 5–74; G. Villani, IX, 128.

[21] This new office is first mentioned in a document cited by Davidsohn in *Geschichte von Florenz,* III, 893, dated Dec. 15, 1321. Cf. *Diplomatico,* S. Annunziata of that date; G. Villani, IX, 128.

whenever a fiscal question was to be treated. No tax ordinance could be proposed to the communal councils unless it had won the approval of the Twelve Good Men. Still another was governmental review of the costly and unwieldly apparatus for the enrollment of mercenaries which was subsequently modified to cut expenditures.[22]

Once again we see the penchant of popular regimes for exalting public authority to the detriment of private prerogative. Severe and even cruel sentences were meted out to the lawless *magnates et potentes* of the city and the countryside. Judicial officers who punished the criminous among them were much lauded. One such magistrate, who sentenced two magnates from the noble house of Somaia to pay the enormous fines of 3,000 lire apiece, was honored by the citizenry with the title "Cavaliere del Popolo." During his term he informed the citizenry that nothing delighted him more than to have his tenure in office spoken of as the "rude signoria."[23] In June of 1325 the communal councils took drastic action against the magnates as a class: all members of this order were to pay triple fines for any offense.[24]

That bastion of magnate power—the captaincy of the Guelf party—had already been attacked. In 1323 the signory decreed that representation in this key political post was to be divided equally between magnate and wealthy commoner. Until then it had been virtually the private preserve of the magnates, despite the fact that wealthy commoners who had been honored with this office had much in common with their magnate confreres. The reason behind the decree of 1323 was the belief that in time of crisis commoners were more trustworthy politically than magnates.[25] To those who sat in the government, they appeared more responsive to public law and less prone to engage in violence and vendetta.

Further, like its predecessors and its successors, this democratized regime conducted a sustained assault upon the antique privileges of the Tuscan church.[26] After a tense struggle the Florentine clergy voted sizable sub-

[22] The "Ufficio della Condotta" was founded about this time. Its existence is acknowledged in a state document of January 1324. R. Davidsohn, *op. cit.*, III, 986, cites the appropriate provision. Cf. *P*, XX, f. 56r.

[23] Cf. R. Davidsohn, *op. cit.*, III, 992. For even more severe condemnations against such venerable magnate families as the Corbizzi, Migliori, Pazzi, and others between 1323 and 1325, see *CCE*, I, bis, fols. 78–79r, 175.

[24] Cf. *LF*, XII, Part 1, fols. 88r–109.

[25] U. Dorini, *op. cit.*, pp. 17–18.

[26] R. Davidsohn, *Forschungen*, IV, 451; G. Villani, IX, 204. On the general theme of the curtailment of ecclesiastical liberties under popular regimes, see M. Becker, "Some Economic Implications of the Conflict Between Church and State in Trecento Florence," *Mediaeval Studies*, XXI (1959), 1–16.

ventions to the public fisc. Lastly, this government, like that of Giano della Bella and the popular signory founded after the deposition of Walter of Brienne in 1342, undertook a sweeping revision of the basic codes of communal law. This was its most lasting contribution and resulted in the masterfully organized statutes of the Captain of the People and *Podestà*. When further revision was begun by the next popular signory, the work of 1322–25 formed its basis.[27]

Although these efforts, by extending the scope of public law to the overmighty, increased the impersonality of the Florentine commune, little was accomplished toward solving the critical problems of the fisc. With the installation of popular government in the city the signory was open to newcomers who had never held the highest public office. In the main these *novi cives,* from the city's greater guilds, proved no less hostile to a direct tax on urban property and capital than their patrician confreres. Members of the greater guilds—new and old—despised the alternative of an *estimo* and favored the regressive indirect levies that fell most heavily upon their social and economic inferiors.

Before the war with Castruccio Castracani, these taxes (gabelles) yielded 180,000 florins. With the democratization of the signory, the rates were adjusted to yield 250,000 florins. The most lucrative of all communal imposts, the customs toll, was revised so that many imports and exports hitherto exempt became taxable. New levies were imposed upon dowries, on contracts drawn up by those who went surety on loans, and even upon the construction of street arches or house balconies. Payment was made by any who utilized weights and measures in their businesses, who owned flour mills, or housed cattle in the markets near the city. The salt monopoly was tightened and levies on real estate transactions raised. As a result, boasts the chronicler Giovanni Villani, the city of Florence drew a more extensive income than was garnered by the mighty King Robert of Naples from his entire realm.[28]

Indeed the cumulative effect of these measures was to augment substantially the revenues of the republic, thereby justifying the civic pride of the chronicler. During no two-month interval in the year 1320 had the flow of money into the treasury risen much above 80,000 lire. But in March-April of the following year, it exceeded 116,000 lire. Furthermore, this high was sustained over the next four months. Unfortunately there is

[27] P. Santini, "Le più antiche riforme superstiti dei costituti fiorentini del comune e del popolo," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* LXXIX (1921), 226 ff.; R. Davidsohn, *op. cit.,* IV, 556.
[28] B. Barbadoro, *op. cit.,* pp. 528–29; R. Davidsohn, IV, 303; G. Villani, IX, 324; XI, 92.

a gap in the records of the treasury until January–February of 1325. During these months, usually the least active of the entire fiscal year, the funds handled by the *camera* totaled over 115,000 lire. Income from the major gabelle, the customs toll, generally declined in the late winter months because weather interfered with trading. In March–April of 1325, when collections from all gabelles were operating most actively, monies entering the *camera* attained a new high for the fourteenth century—just above 178,000 lire. Nor did this spectacular ascent abate: by September–October of that year treasury intake climbed to the encouraging figure of 211,000 lire.[29]

Under the pressure of war the guilds were compelled to contribute to the well-being of the public fisc, relinquishing temporarily their newly won tax immunities. First, all twenty-one of the city's *arti* agreed to pay a special general impost. Next, representatives of the seven major guilds concurred in the decision to make a separate contribution. Meanwhile, the signory called upon the most eminent banking and commercial establishments of Tuscany to make loans to the *camera.* The Accaiauoli, Alberti, Bardi, Cocchi, Del Bene, Peruzzi, Scali, and others advanced sizable sums. Further, that old stand-by, the Guelf party, was summoned before the signory and asked to make a generous loan. The communal councils, which had been debating the merits of a special tax on rural property, agreed that the rate should be high.[30]

Despite these many reforms, communal income still was insufficient for underwriting the grueling war against Castruccio. The hard-pressed signory began to impose additional *prestanze* with alarming regularity. These loans, sometimes voluntary and sometimes forced, reached a figure of well over 270,000 florins for the year 1325. It would be well to remember that each *prestanza* was interest-bearing and could return as much as 10 per cent to 15 per cent to the communal creditors. It is therefore not surprising to discover that affluent Florentines—the only kind to sit in the signory—championed *prestanze* whenever the commune was short of revenue. A return of 10 per cent certainly exceeded that from landed holdings and even compared favorably with ordinary yields from business investments.

Over the next seventeen years those many greater guildsmen who sat in the signory loaned an average of 500 florins apiece to the *camera.* A single Florentine family—the most politically influential—the Bardi, held

[29] *Diplomatico,* Cestello (July 30, 1325); *Diplomatico,* Commenda Covi (Jan. 22, 1326).
[30] *LF,* XII, f. 2; *P,* XXIII, f. 10; B. Barbadoro, *op. cit.,* p. 148.

government credits of above 30,000 florins, and the Strozzi—also bankers —lagged not far behind. Thus we can date both the origin of the communal debt and the formation of a permanent creditor class from the period of protracted warfare against Castruccio. The debt became a fixed feature in the polis and caused political consequences commensurate with its increase.

Beginning in the 1320's there was an almost perfect identity between the creditor and the ruling class of the commune. Although this was an intensification of an earlier process, creditors became a permanent cadre—holders of long-term government obligations. Earlier, the ruling class and hence the creditor class either paid an exceptional impost or held short-term obligations that were regularly liquidated. If any rule existed in Florentine politics it was that political power tended to devolve upon those who advanced funds to enable the republic to meet the many emergencies and contingencies of *trecento* life.

If the treasury intake was more ample in late 1325, so, too, unfortunately were the outlays for mercenaries and fortifications. The budget was particularly strained at this time, since as a defensive measure the signory had determined to resume construction of the third and last circle of city walls. At every 115 meters a tower 23 meters high was to be erected on rectangular battlements so that the community might be secure from even the longest siege.[31] Naturally, such a defense added substantially to already heavy communal outlays. Over the year 1325 expenditures reached the unprecedented high of 1,104,276 lire. Wages for troops and disbursements for fortifications alone accounted for over 85 per cent of this figure. Although as we have noted the income of the *camera* had been swollen by the many *prestanze* and intake from the gabelles was at a record level, the republic still could not hope to achieve a balanced budget. Nor was there to be surcease of fiscal pressure: July and August were peak months of hostilities, and although they tapered off slightly during the autumn of 1325, there was only a modest saving in military outlays—about 5 per cent over a four-month period.[32]

Unhappily all these expenditures were of little consequence, for in

[31] R. Davidsohn, *op. cit.,* III, n. 892.

[32] *Diplomatico,* Cestello (July 4, 1325); *Diplomatico,* Commenda Covi (Dec. 31, 1325). Communal expenditures for the first half of 1325 reached the unprecedented high of approximately 580,000 lire, which was at least 100,000 lire in excess of the treasury intake. During the late summer months of that year mercenaries alone cost the *camera* a minimum of 300,000 lire. (A convenient ratio of lira (or pound) to florin is 3.1 to 1.) On the complex and crucial topic of money, see the writings of C. Cipolla, especially his magisterial book, *Studi di storia della moneta* (Pavia: 1949).

1325 the Florentine armies were decimated by Castruccio on the battlefield of Altopascio near the Luccan frontier. The heroic efforts of the popular government brought neither victory with glory nor peace with honor to the Arno republic. Florence suffered her worst humiliation since the Sienese made the Arbia run red with Florentine blood almost a century ago. Intensifying the tragedy of those bitter days was a series of business failures. Three pillars of Florentine prosperity, the great banking houses of Amieri, Pilestri, and Scali, were forced to discontinue business operations. Bankruptcy ensued, and in the wake of these failures other firms collapsed, much to the consternation of a legion of distraught creditors clamoring frantically for restitution.[33] Both on the battlefield and in the counting house the times were indeed out of joint. A more radical political remedy was needed; the popular government had proved too temperate to deal with enduring crises.

## V

Although the popular regime had fortified the city, raised armies and financed them, their efforts had been undone by the host of Castruccio. One tried and tested alternative remained—despotism. Such a choice had wide support among the ruling orders. Twice over the first half of the *trecento* a foreign lord was installed as despot of the commune. In each instance—1325 and 1342—his rule was initiated with the enthusiastic support and the required two-thirds vote of the communal councils. Thus despotism was not the work of a small, self-seeking coterie but rather the choice of the upper reaches of Florentine society acting in concert and, with characteristic medieval sensitivity to the imperatives of legalism, gaining legislative approval. The second despot, Walter of Brienne, was installed with the rousing consent of the politically disenfranchised, the workers and petty artisans of the city.[34]

In the 1320's and late 1330's, those who held high communal office

[33] R. Davidsohn, *op. cit.*, III, nn. 888, 902. Giovanni Villani (X, 4) judges the extent of this "maggiore sconfitta" to be over 400,000 florins.

[34] On the topic of the adherence of *il popolo minuto* in particular and the lower orders in general to Walter of Brienne, see G. Brucker and M. Becker, "Una lettera in difesa della dittatura nella Firenze del Trecento," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* CXIII (1955), 251–61. Among the more prominent patrician families whose names are recorded in public documents as having ardently favored giving full powers to Walter of Brienne were the Adimari, Alberti, Altoviti, Antella, Bardi, Baroncelli, Gherardini, Gianfigliazzi, Guicciardini, Pazzi, Ricci, Scali, to list but a few. Cf. *LF,* XXI, fols. 95–109r; *PD,* III, fols. 17r–22r; *CCE,* I bis, fols. 130r, 137r–138, 161, 206r.

were confronted with the problem of furnishing leadership to a medieval city in a time of disaster. The guild world, the church, the religious confraternities, the tower societies, the feudatories of Tuscany, the Guelf party, and a score of semiautonomous, quasi-political bodies sought to preserve sacred privileges, liberties, exemptions, immunities.[35] Members of each of these organizations sat in the communal councils or staffed the priorate. Therefore they were able to defeat proposals designed to intrude upon the privileged status of these corporate bodies. They were especially unwilling to introduce radical reform that might undermine privileged status. Thus, the crucial years 1325 and 1342, they refused to inaugurate necessary revisions of the Florentine fiscal system.

Political wisdom taught those in the communal councils to prefer stopgap measures and piecemeal solutions to drastic remedies. Not only were councilors anxious to preserve the privileged status of a plethora of quasi-political entities which they believed to be always honorable and sometimes even sacrosanct, but they also were anxious to avoid the reputation for economic radicalism so easily accorded to those who championed direct taxation or even the reduction of interest rates. Among the highest reaches of Florentine society existed the unshakable conviction that an impost such as the *estimo* was tantamount to the confiscation of patrimony. Not a single Florentine chronicler advocated the imposition of direct levies, and only a few were not overtly hostile to the *estimo*. Entire batteries of advisers to the signory during the late *trecento* shared abundantly in this animus. The few, then, who were foolhardy enough to speak openly for such a radical expedient incurred the undying enmity of their distraught and affluent contemporaries.[36]

Government business was conducted largely through private petitions; very soon members of the communal councils became accustomed to view-

[35] The signory was much more considerate of these antique rights if the organization in question had sufficient resources to make propitious loans to the communal *camera*. The statute of the *Podestà* (1322–25) contains the following rescript of a provision: "Pecunia Partis Guelfe sit quidam thesaurus Populi et Comunis Florentie, ac Pars, Populus et Comunis Florentie sit unum et idem." U. Dorini, *op. cit.*, p. 8. For loans of the Guelf party to the *camera,* see B. Barbadoro, *Consigli della Repubblica Fiorentina* (Bologna: 1921), I, 122 ff.

[36] On one such figure, the political renegade Guido Guazza, who was *gonfaloniere di giustizia* at a time when interest on the *Monte* was reduced by two-thirds, see N. Rodolico, *La democrazia fiorentina nel suo tramonto (1378–82),* (Bologna: 1905), pp. 134–36. He won the undying enmity of his contemporaries. The political downfall of such a leading politician as the outspoken Benedetto di Nerozzo Alberti can be attributed to his support of certain deflationary measures considered anathema by many of the greater guildsmen. Cf. R. de Roover, "The Story of the Alberti Company of Florence, 1302–1348," *The Business History Review,* XXXII (1958), 16.

ing politics as a series of compromises between claimants and claims. A petitioner might request tax relief and a portion of his claim be allowed. Another might request a leave from a particular office or even an exemption from serving and be granted his request upon payment of a small fine. A monastery might present an ancient charter declaring it exempt from certain imposts, the validity of which was recognized after the good monks had voted the commune a small benevolence. Thus over the late *dugento* and early *trecento* the communal councils manifested an exquisite sensitivity to the niceties of corporate identity and medieval status.

In a world where the commune sought to adjudicate modestly between the public good and private interest, a premium was placed upon moderation. Even the tense, demanding political situation of the late fourteenth century moved few men in public office to intone any but the most pious of political platitudes. Always emphasis was placed upon doing "the cautious and the moderate" rather than "the hasty and the immoderate." When economic counsel was needed, speakers were sought whose reputation guaranteed their sense of measure. Such bold-spoken men as Corso Donati, Giano della Bella, Salvestro de' Medici, the poet Guido Cavalcanti, and even Dante were notorious, albeit glorious, exceptions. That they were conspicuous for their political failures and won the ire of their fellow countrymen if not permanent banishment, were well known to *trecento* Florentines.

Throughout the corpus of Florentine manner books, memorials, and diaries there is an unrelenting reiteration of the postulate that the politically temperate alone can survive. The tragic careers of Petrarch's father or of the chroniclers Compagni and the Villanis stood as cruel reminders of the price of political partisanship or even sincerity. Certainly the *Decameron,* the most popular prose work of the Florentine *trecento,* offers a myriad of object lessons.[37] Those who sat in the communal councils and served as advisers to the government, like the generous and liberal characters of the *Decameron,* never gave provocation or sought excessive revenge. Did they not regularly do business with one another, belong to the same aristocratic organizations, and even contract strategic, if tense, marriages? In the restricted but fashionable center of town they had ample time to make many enemies and, hopefully, a few friends as they walked the narrow streets of their compact medieval quarter. There was no escape

[37] Giovanni di Gherardo, *Il Paradiso degli Alberti,* ed. A. Wesselofsky (Bologna: 1867), I, Part I, 47; Part II, 6.

from intimate and sometimes abrasive personal contacts. Life in a small polis where at most 4,000 men might participate in the affairs of the state was certain to be intimate, sometimes heated, and generally factious. Constant admonitions punctuated legislative debates: under no circumstances was the speaker to be excessive in word or thought. He could employ an ornate and new vocabulary and even a series of evocative movements. Seldom were governmental advisers willing to violate the canon that emphasized the radical gesture and the conservative idea.[38]

In 1325 and once again in the early 1340's the signory was compelled to establish machinery to renovate the obsolete tributary system. The first step was the dreaded *estimo*. In each instance, communal councils approved the act in principle only to refuse to see it implemented. On one occasion they even went so far as to elect the surveyors, notaries, and judges to assess commercial wealth and appraise land holdings, but at the last moment, after the vital information had been secured and schematized, they refused to permit the signory to initiate measures for exaction of the levy.[39] This timorousness stemmed in part from the councilor's own appreciation of the moderate half-measure and his desire to keep intact the *persona* of a prudent man.[40] Further, he was anxious not to antagonize friendly constituents in the world of guild immunities, religious liberties, and honorific privilege that were the stuff of the Florentine civic milieu. Moreover, there was the vague but disquieting notion that direct taxation was an offense to God and man, since even a loan to the polis at no interest was immoral if not downright confiscatory.[41]

There are few axioms that apply metahistorically or even poetically to *trecento* Florentine experience. One that might be tempting to advance

[38] Cf. G. Villani, VIII, 8, and D. Compagni, I, 11, 14, on reactions to the reformer Giano della Bella. On a latter-day political figure who also stands as an exception to the rule of prudence, see G. Brucker, "The Medici in the Fourteenth Century," *Speculum,* XXXII (1957), 18.

[39] *LF,* XIII, Part 1, f. 44; Part 2, f. 14r; XVIII, 18, fols. 74–76. See especially the crucial amendment of May 30, 1341, in which it was stated that explicit permission must be obtained from the councils to initiate collection, even though prior authorization had been obtained. *Ibid.,* XIX 19, fols. 118–121r.

[40] The thrust of the Florentine notion of *arete* was always toward the middle. For an elaborate passage from Brunetto Latini's *Il tesoretto,* ed. G. Zannoni (Florence: 1824), pp. 59–61, see *Capitolo* VI, where the poet presents theological and philosophical arguments for the locus of "la ragione [that force for nobility in man] nel mezzo." The virtue of prudence was at the very base of all knowledge that would permit men "vivere civile," in the influential opinion of that very popular Florentine moralist Francesco da Barberino. Cf. A. Zenatti, *Il Trionfo d'Amore di Francesco da Barberino* (Catania: 1901), pp. 5–8.

[41] See the fulsome praise heaped upon the Florentine signory by Matteo Villani in 1355 when it converted an *estimo* into an interest-bearing forced loan. *Cronica,* IV, 83.

would run thusly: If a regime is democratized radically—opened to artisans and craftsmen, as it was in the summer of 1378—the likelihood for extensive fiscal reform is increased.[42] Illogically, at least from the vantage point of the geometrician, the converse also holds: The more despotic the regime, the greater the probability of the imposition of the *estimo*.

In December of 1325 the citizen-rulers of the republic, with the full support of the communal councils, acted to confer the lordship of Florence upon Charles, Duke of Calabria, son of the republic's old ally, King Robert of Naples. His term was unprecedented—ten years with powers unequaled by any previous foreign lord.[43] The popular government that had bestowed the lordship of the city upon Charles had, as we have noted, verged upon imposing the *estimo* in August of 1325, when it established machinery for exacting direct taxation and declared that its desire was to eradicate injustice and inequality in the tributary system by taxing each person "according to his capacities and his possibilities."[44] But neither formal statements, no matter how inspired, nor the appointment of fiscal experts meant that the treasury would soon enjoy increased communal income. The popular government displayed neither the energy nor the courage to revise the tax system. Not until fifteen years later was such an unpleasant eventuality to occur.

Only with the advent of Charles of Calabria were series of essential reforms introduced to safeguard the solvency of the commune. Certainly it was hoped that solvency would make possible the vigorous continuation of war with Castruccio. Furthermore, with Charles in power, responsibility for these unpopular and drastic remedies could be avoided: one might speak or vote against them and yet know the revenue would be garnered. One of the first acts under Charles's aegis was the suspension of a variety of tax immunities.[45] The communal councils met with his

[42] Cf. M. Becker, "Florentine 'Libertas': Political Independents and 'Novi Cives,' 1372–1378," *Traditio,* XVIII (1962), 404–6. Even when the signory was extensively democratized, there was considerable trepidation concerning the implementation of the *estimo.* Cf. *CP,* XVI, f. 53 (Dec. 2, 1378). There the speaker for the *gonfalonieri* advises that the *estimo* be handled "ita quod nulla murmoratio sequantur."

[43] The vote on bestowing power on the Duke of Calabria is instructive. The three bodies (soon to be consolidated into two) ran 69 yes, 27 no; 43 yes, 14 no; 224 yes, 24 no. Opposition was much less than that registered against certain of his fiscal measures. Cf *LF,* XII, Part 2, fols. 121–24r.

[44] Everyone was to be assessed "bene iuste et equaliter, ita quod quilibet extimum habeat secundum facultatem et possibilitatem suam." B. Barbadoro, *op. cit.,* p. 155.

[45] Cf. *P,* XXIII, fols. 67r–70; *P,* XXV, f. 72; *Diplomatico,* Spedale degli Innocenti (May 12, 1326).

lieutenants and a decree was issued stating that no individual, corporation, or subject territory was to be exempt from public imposts, even though exemptions had been granted by previous governments. In addition, all orders of society, including the prestigious nobles of the countryside as well as the sacrosanct guilds of the city, were held liable for communal taxes. Finally, delinquencies and peculations by communal revenue officers were to be dealt with summarily. In conjunction with this last measure a general review of the tax rate and the tax structure was decreed.[46]

Despite reforms initiated during the first year of Charles's tenure, income from communal imposts lagged. In the first few months of 1327 the treasury intake totaled only 26,367 lire, a new low for these months. Even in January–February of 1319, an interval of serious crisis, the figure reached just above 36,000 lire. In January–February of 1325 it had totaled over 115,000 lire; during the same interim four years earlier, it was 81,625 lire. In 1316, the earliest January–February period for which records survive, the total was 65,749 lire, or almost 50,000 lire above the 1327 figure.[47]

It was evident such a meager sum would be inadequate to finance even the ordinary business of a government at peace; never could it hope to underwrite the extensive campaigns necessary to defeat the formidable Castruccio. Charles of Calabria did not assume personal direction of affairs of state until late in the year 1326, and neither his lieutenants nor his circle of citizen advisers seemed anxious to impose taxes on real and personal property. The Duke's vicar, Walter of Brienne, later (1342) to become lord of the city, was most popular during the interval when no *estimo* was exacted—perhaps he and his clique understood too well that the announcement of the imposition of an *estimo* might provoke citizen unrest. When such a decree was issued by the Duke's ministers, riots did ensue.[48]

It was not until October of 1326 that a commission staffed by men from each ward (*gonfalone*) was appointed and instructed to make the tax lists for the *estimo.* Similar to the *catasto* of 1427 in being a levy on both property and income, it differed from the more ingenious *catasto* in that it was based upon an estimate arrived at by a committee of assessors rather than upon the tax returns of individual citizens. The two revenue

[46] *P,* XXV, fols. 72 ff.; *GA,* CXXII, f. 11; *CCE,* I, bis, f. 39.
[47] *Diplomatico,* Cestello (July 30, 1327); B. Barbadoro, *op. cit.,* pp. 164–66.
[48] *CCE,* I bis, f. 187r.

measures, separated by a century, each made provisions for an exact and detailed description of the real and personal properties on which taxes were to be imposed. All Florentines were to be taxed "pro eorum facultatibus, possessionibus atque bonis." Witnesses were to be summoned to verify or contest the evaluation of taxable patrimony. At the end of the year officers in charge of the *estimo* recorded the results of this inquest; when all real and personal property, as well as professional income, was listed and described, an impost of a certain percentage of the total valuation of urban wealth was promulgated, with each ward or parish paying its exact share.[49] An identical procedure was followed by Walter of Brienne, when he decreed his *estimo* in 1342–43. This system had an obvious advantage: since the treasury could fix the rate at a certain percentage of taxable wealth, forthcoming revenue could be precisely predicted. Taxation machinery was complete, and by March–April of 1327 returns began to enter the treasury. The income of the commune was better than four times that of the preceding two months and three times higher in May–June. In early autumn another *estimo* was decreed; between the two, 120,000 florins was garnered.[50] The yield from gabelles and direct levies was about 400,000 florins a year. Had the treasury intake remained at that high level, deficit financing, soon to become a staple of communal fiscal history, would have been forestalled. If this happy condition had continued, the communal debt would have been minimal, and a variety of crucial alterations in civic life would not have taken place.

The death of Charles of Calabria and Castruccio Castracani in the same year, at almost the same moment in the autumn of 1328, released the Florentines from the expensive program of her despotic would-be savior as well as from the menace of her dreaded adversary. This piece of remarkable good fortune tempted Machiavelli to observe with customary irony in his *History of Florence* that death had ever been the best ally of the feckless citizenry. The contemporary chronicler Giovanni Villani concluded his account of Charles's lordship in a more somber vein; had it not been for the black intervention of the Angel of Death, he claimed, an irate citizenry would have taken arms against the vacillating Duke and his costly regime.[51]

Indeed there was mounting opposition against Charles's fiscal program

[49] *Diplomatico,* Strozzi (Nov. 18, 1328).
[50] The chronicler was particularly knowledgeable since he was a member of the new commission impaneled to alter existing schedules for the *estimo.* G. Villani, X, 17; *Diplomatico,* Cestello (July 30, 1327); R. Davidsohn, *Forschungen,* IV, 294 ff.
[51] G. Villani, X, 117.

well before his death, encouraged further by plans for still more drastic measures. A proposal to raise revenue "de beneplacite et conscientia domini nostri ducis" had been ratified by votes of only 58 to 22 and 44 to 27. Communal councilors orated vehemently against this type of sweeping revision: Let the Duke employ the *estimo* to raise money, they argued. Don't permit him to resort to other expedients! More discreet speakers advised that the enactment be passed, at the same time seeming to emasculate it by suggesting that Charles not be permitted to levy excise taxes or collect *prestanze*.[52] The Florentine sense of propriety was offended by the patent immorality of two of Charles's measures: his tax on gambling (*gabella ludi*), because it seemed to lend sanction to the games of chance which so many patricians enjoyed, and the licensing act granting a cartel of pawnbrokers the exclusive right to loan on pledges.[53] The latter had been practiced formerly, but without government recognition, so that at least fragile Christian norms could be maintained. Intense opposition was also directed against the creation of a special *balia* to collect new war loans. The communal councils in the interim voted down a series of proposals for levying new *prestanze* on the city. The major guilds were deeply disturbed by repeated levies and the fourteen lesser guilds by nagging fiscal assessments on their treasuries. Especially irksome to the many involved in Florence's foremost industry—cloth manufacture—was a new impost on fulling mills. Giovanni Villani was one of the principal spokesmen in the communal councils against this last measure.[54]

Revenue from excise taxes, tolls, and the *estimo* had been utilized to underwrite the war against Castruccio. Communal creditors from whom *prestanze* were collected could receive neither principal nor interest, for state income, previously pledged to the creditors, was consumed in the war effort. Had Charles lived, had the war been terminated, and had the communal councils been willing to vote a continuation of direct taxa-

[52] *LF,* XIII, Part 2, f. 17r (Aug. 31, 1327). The major guilds had already urged that they be released from the obligation of paying certain imposts because income from the *estimo* would soon be ample. Cf. *Ibid.,* Part 1, f. 58r (Mar. 6, 1327). Shortly thereafter, the minor guilds followed suit with an identical plea. Cf. *Ibid.,* Part 2, f. 9 (May 6, 1327).

[53] Only a few months after the Duke of Calabria's death, the communal councils did act to rescind the offensive, almost sacrilegious levy on gambling. Moreover, while licensing of pawnbrokers was to continue as an unofficial, almost *sub rosa* governmental activity, no formal provision accorded it legal sanction. Further violence was done the fragile sensibilities of the Florentines through the overt contempt of Charles and his entourage for Florentine sumptuary laws. Cf. G. Villani, X, 11.

[54] For his strictures see *LF,* XIII, Part 2, f. 34 (Dec. 11, 1327). There was widespread opposition to the imposition of new *prestanze* and imposts, voiced by such new men as Banco Puccio as well as scions of older houses like Metto Biliotti. Cf. *Ibid.,* f. 19r (Sept. 1, 1327).

tion, the citizen debt contracted during the 1320's could easily have been managed and perhaps even liquidated. But history does not happen in the pluperfect subjunctive, and after the death of Charles the signory took prompt action to revoke the *estimo* and suspend other fiscal provisions enacted by the Duke. Not all Florentines in the communal councils agreed to this precipitous act, for the revocation barely secured the required two-thirds majority.[55] The same councils in 1331 concurred almost unanimously with the proposal that Florentine governments were not to seek revenue either through direct taxation or through special levies on guilds and other corporate bodies.[56] Another time the *status quo ante* was restored and the councilors were again free of the disquieting notion of civic sacrifice. Again history undid their security.

The *estimo* had been imposed three times during Charles of Calabria's rule over Florence. The average income from this source over his tenure was 60,000 florins a year. In time of peace such a return would have been more than ample for both the payment of interest and the amortization of public debt. The dilemma of the signory that followed the lordship of Charles was now to reconcile the reluctance to tax urban property and capital with the passionate, luxurious dreams of empire. Moreover, this signory, which assumed power in 1328, was liable both for the restitution of interest and the payment of principal on the many forced loans contracted during the previous years.

[55] The vote on the cancellation of the *estimo* by the new regime was 128 to 47 in one council and 178 to 52 in the other.
[56] *P,* CCXVI, f. 130 (Apr. 14, 1331).

# THE HALCYON YEARS: THE OLIGARCHY AND THE GENTLE PAIDEIA OF THE 1330'S

# III

The regime that followed the lordship of the late and unlamented Charles of Calabria stands as an almost classic instance of an oligarchical signory. Its power and authority were consolidated late in 1328, and by mid-1329 it was exercising an unchallenged hegemony over the city. During the next thirteen years better than 70 per cent of the high offices were held by members of the three top guilds—the wool merchants and manufacturers, the bankers, and the finishers of foreign cloth. These men served the interests of the entrepreneurial and business community on the one hand and of the patriciate on the other. The heroic figures of the world of the *Decameron* who undertook hazardous adventures, journeyed to the fabulous markets of the East, and always displayed magnanimity and liberality, were the worldly companions and sage advisers of the princes of Europe. Their real-life counterparts—the Acciaiuoli, the Bardi, the Cerchi, the Frescobaldi, the Mozzi, the Peruzzi, the Scali—had all been counselors, sometimes friends, and always bankers for the crowned heads of the Continent. Their prestige, both of person and calling, was uncontested. Even the most snobbish *trecento* Florentine was willing to admit that certain of his ancestors had been merchants—"but," he would add, "of noble and honest not base merchandise, voyaging to France and England and trading in wool and cloth as do all the greater and better men of the city: which activity is esteemed fine and undemeaning."[1]

The distinction between "mercatanzie nobili" and trafficking in "cose vili" was certainly a commonplace in fourteenth-century Florence. It was

[1] P. J. Jones, "Florentine Families and Florentine Diaries," *op. cit.*, p. 191, especially n. 67. Cf. also G. Brucker, *Florentine Politics and Society*, p. 36. Ideally, the merchant was to achieve a perfect blend of the courtly, with its emphasis upon liberality and magnanimity, and the prudential burgher ethic. The latter was to prevent him from consuming his patrimony "in cortesia" so that a balance might be maintained between the *uomo savio* and the *buono cavalcatore*. Cf. Morelli, *Ricordi*, p. 161; D. Velluti, *op. cit.*, pp. 27, 36; *Decameron*, V, 9.

the inclination for "noble trade" that was so highly prized among the young men of the city. Diarists, writers of memorials and keepers of *ricordanze* wrote proudly of the moment when a youth was first apprenticed to a mighty wool merchant or sent into the counting house of a renowned banker. A defensive note is sounded by these self-same writers whenever they report one of their progeny shunning "honorable" mercantile pursuits. There were even those who condemned roundly the *rentier*. Although Paolo di Ser Pace da Certaldo, a veritable "Poor Richard" of the *trecento,* does not explicitly castigate those who live on landed revenue, he writes, "The country produces good animals but bad men, therefore use it little: stay in the city, practice some craft or trade, and you'll get on."[2]

Giovanni Villani is our most complete and incisive source for the history of the decade of the 1330's. His father had been an associate in a leading wool concern of his day, the Cerchi, and Giovanni, at twenty-five, was honored with a partnership in the internationally known Peruzzi banking house. Later he became associated with the Buonaccorsi. It was this guild patriciate the chronicler extolled in the earlier part of his narrative, calling them "the pillars of Christian trade." His faith in the business sagacity and moral rectitude of these pious merchant pilgrims of the Mediterranean continued until the early 1340's. The eleventh book of his chronicle, which is by far the most informative, treats this decade with an abundance of detail reminiscent of a late medieval Flemish painting. Villani's is not the intellect of endless allegory; instead he constructs successive chapters so that they lead to the keystone of an arch and then recede. The keystone itself is the ninety-third and ninety-fourth chapters, where Villani indulges his burgher pride to the fullest, composing a paean to the boundless wealth of the citizenry and the copious revenues of the republic.[3] This laud recalls the inscription already referred to on the walls of the Bargello (1255), so brimming with burgher pride. Few such testaments to medieval notions of progress remain for our inspection.

[2] Paolo di Ser Pace da Certaldo, *Libro di buoni costumi,* ed. A. Schiaffini (Florence: 1945). See V. Branca's note, in his edition of Morelli's *Ricordi,* on the ancient proverb, "La villa fa buone bestie e cattivi uomini," and his references to Franco Sacchetti's *Rime* and Alberti's *Della famiglia* (p. 234).

[3] On the reliability of these statistics, see E. Fiumi, "La demografia fiorentina nelle pagine di Giovanni Villani," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* CVIII (1950), 78–158; A. Sapori, "L'attenibilità di alcune testimonianze oronistiche dell'economia medievale," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* LXXXVI (1929), 19–30; A. Sapori, *L'età della rinascita secoli XIII–XVI* (Milan: 1958), 132–163.

From indirect taxes alone, boasts the chronicler, receipts of the treasury reach well above 300,000 florins per annum. The number of communal magistrates, public functionaries, and bureaucrats is legion. Schools, pious foundations, gorgeous palaces, splendid country homes, hospitals, and churches abound throughout the Florentine domain. Evidence of charity is everywhere: there are more than a thousand beds furnished for the poor, the infirm, and the aged. Six hundred men stand nightwatch so that a population only recently having reached the impressive figure of over 90,000 can rest secure. To this grand total of denizens of the city must be added at least 80,000, who inhabit the countryside.

The chronicler takes his greatest pleasure, however, in reporting the flourishing state of industry and commerce throughout the Arno republic. There are some two hundred wool manufacturers, and they employ 30,000 workers. Their gross product is valued at 1,200,000 florins annually. It is true that 30 years ago there were 300 manufacturers, but they produced a coarser cloth worth only half as much. *Calimala* cloth production—largely for domestic use—reached 300,000 florins a year. There were eighty banks in the city conducting exchange and credit operations, and their fame was bruited throughout the world. The bankers were, in point of fact, the very embodiment of Villani's merchant pilgrims.

The direction of the city's destiny was securely bound to the prosperity and prestige of the first families of the *Lana, Cambio,* and *Calimala* guilds. It was the patriciate of these guilds who provided the republic with its political talent and its distinguished bureaucratic personnel. Even more telling, they underwrote the communal budget throughout the thirties. Despite his burgher pride Giovanni Villani ends his peroration on Florentine prosperity in the mid-thirties on a less than exalted note; lachrymosely, he must admit that although communal revenue stands at a record high, the treasury is now regularly running a deficit. Warfare still plagued the republic, and loans from the affluent continued to be a prized remedy for raising ready cash quickly. Would there be a day of reckoning? The chronicler's Christian conscience and his business shrewdness conspired to raise monumental doubts that soon undermined his civic confidence as well as his belief in the morality of *trecento* capitalism.[4]

[4] To the jaundiced eye of the once sanguine Villani, the great companies had become little better than "prestatori" who loaned at usurious rates, covetous of "sudden gains," inspired only by cupidity and "grande folle." Cf. G. Villani, XI, 88, 134, 138, XII, 55. These selfsame business men would betray their city and consign it to the despot Walter of Brienne in order to escape making restitution to their creditors. For these sins, Florence had to suffer all manner of humiliation from pestilence and famine to loss of precious political liberty. Cf. XII, 3, 84.

# I

The identity between those who exercised political power and those who made loans to the *camera* is almost complete. The Acciaiuoli served as bankers for the commune in her dealings with north Italian states, advanced money at public tax auctions, made loans to the communal treasury on behalf of the *Cambio* and *Calimala* guilds, assisted Florence in purchases of grain, aided in the hire of troops, pledged money for the salaries of mercenaries, and, in the company of the other two leading banking houses—the Bardi and Peruzzi—engaged in all manner of delicate fiscal diplomacy. At the same time, they served in every communal post, from that of *podestà* over some remote village in the countryside, to prior of the republic, and, finally, to key member of an extraordinary commission. The Acciaiuoli were especially ubiquitous in state fiscal posts where they could bring their long business experience to bear on public questions. Lesser scions took captaincies of castles and fortifications while their more affluent kinsmen went on embassies to the papal curia or the court of the French king. They were warm supporters of the lordship of Charles of Calabria and later of the despotism of Walter of Brienne and thus assumed posts of trust under each. Nowhere in the records of the communal councils is there evidence of Acciaiuoli dissent with the policies of the ruling oligarchy of the 1330's. Only recently risen to prominence in the late *dugento,* this family came to invest heavily in the burgeoning communal debt. Whenever the republic was pressed, the Acciaiuoli company made numerous *prestanze* to the *camera,* as did each of its nineteen partners.[5]

The Alberti, the great feudatories of rural Tuscany—who had no connection with the Counts Alberti—may have had their political beginnings in the person of a certain thirteenth-century judge who bequeathed to them patrimony, honorable name, and influence. By the fourteenth century they were conducting a thriving merchant company and soon

[5] Especially useful for the history of Florentine families is the work of P. Litta, *Famigli celebri italiani* (Milan: 1847–99), and the many monographs of L. Passerini, published in Florence between the 1850's and 1870's. On the early history of the Acciaiuoli, see C. Della Berardenga, *Gli Acciaiuoli di Firenze nella luce dei loro tempi* (Florence: 1962), I, 7–100. (This work is entirely unsatisfactory, and there is much need of a more rigorous history of this renowned house.) For a few select documents pertaining to the fiscal contributions of this ubiquitous clan to the polis, see *CapP,* XII, f. 235r; *Diplomatico,* Strozzi (Nov. 20, 1342); *LF,* XII, Part 2, f. 44r; XIII, Part 1, f. 18r; *P,* CCXVI, f. 139; XXIV, f. 63; XXV, f. 21.

served as the principal bankers for the Holy See. Like their contemporaries, the Acciaiuoli, they were regularly elected to the consulship of the *Calimala* guild. Duccio, Iacopo, and Caroccio Alberti were all stalwarts of a complex alliance system intended to enhance Florentine domination over Tuscany. Each served on commissions charged with drawing up treaties with Genoa and Venice during the years 1336 and 1338. Regularly they undertook embassies, traveling to Siena and Perugia in the south and Venice and Genoa to the north. They also were to speak in the communal councils on behalf of governmental policy, even when it was exceedingly unpopular. For example, they supported the election of a Captain for the Custody of the City, an official much feared by the burghers because of his sweeping and ill-defined power. They also spoke in favor of closer ties with the church, but, since these entailed large-scale subsidies, many citizens would be disconcerted.[6] Needless to say, they also stood in the vanguard of those who made substantial loans to the treasury.[7]

The Alberti, like many other influential families, began to cool toward the policies of the oligarchy after 1338. As we shall see, this date marked the commencement of a critical reaction to the government's overly ambitious program. Economic and foreign policy began to display ominous signs of crisis and even collapse. The Alberti became harsh critics of governmental policy. They advised the councils to reject the signory's proposal for a new *prestanza* in 1340 and objected to giving the signory authority to elect a Captain of War. In 1342 they were part of a general movement among the guild patriciate to install a despot in response to the failure of oligarchical politics and the collapse of the domestic economy. Later in the same year they made crucial loans to the new lord of the city, Walter of Brienne.

The Albizzi clan also emerged as a major political force in communal life in the last years of the thirteenth century. Like other patrician families, their patrimony was divided between land and business. By the middle years of the *trecento* they were reckoned the wealthiest of all *Lana* families. Wool manufacturers and venturesome traders, they were well represented on the several commissions created to conduct the commune's foreign policy in the decade of the 1330's. They also furnished the republic with leading diplomats and upon occasion even provided hostages

[6] On the Alberti, see R. de Roover, *op. cit.*, and A. Sapori, "Gli Alberti Del Giudice di Firenze," in *Studi in onore di Gino Luzzatto* (Milan: 1950), I, 254–73. Cf. also *LF*, XVI, Part 2, f. 30r; XVII, f. 8r. *Cap. P.* XII, f. 118; *LF*, XIX, f. 113.

[7] *Ibid*, f. 113r; *DP*, III, f. 22r; *CCE*, I bis, f. 10.

as surety for Florentine good faith toward a neighboring power. The key political figure from this house was Antonio di Lando, who served on *balie* for raising revenue, hiring troops, carrying diplomacy, and, of course, making war and peace. Most important, he was an influential member of The Twenty (*I Venti*), the commission founded and granted dictatorial powers in 1341 to terminate the costly, disastrous war against Pisa. Others of the Albizzi served as tax collectors, diplomats, judicial officers, and castellans for Walter of Brienne. They, too, made generous loans to support the fisc during the thirties.[8]

The Aldobrandini, formerly partners in the Peruzzi Company and later *socii* in the Buonaccorsi firm, were a smaller clan and their government credits not so impressive, but their activities indicate the potential political role of business associates of the great entrepreneurial houses. Like the Strozzi and others, they furnished credit to rural communes and parishes to enable them to pay their state imposts. Even more useful, they acted, in company with the Acciaiuoli, Strozzi, and some of the newer houses, as tax farmers and purchasers of communal gabelles. This service was essential to the commune until after 1343, for only then did the state set up its own machinery for the collection of many important gabelles. The Aldobrandini also enjoyed prestige from service in the Florentine army, high office in the Guelf party, and many governorships in neighboring territories. They shared the general animus against assessments on guilds as well as the desperate hopes of the *maggiori* who founded The Twenty.[9]

The Altoviti, principally matriculated in the bankers' guild, like the Aldobrandini were not a first-run house. Yet they sat in the inner councils of the Guelf party, served as consuls and magistrates in the major guilds, were well represented in the Tuscan church, and held all manner of public office, from supervisors of enforcement of communal statutes over weights and measures to magistrates in the priorate. At first they supported Charles of Calabria, but like so many others soon joined the opposition. In the 1330's the most prominent spokesman from their ranks was the jurist Tommaso. Representation by an eminent jurist was an-

[8] There is no study of the manifold activities of this *Lana* family, who had come to be large estate owners in the early fourteenth century as well as illustrious spokesmen for the Guelf cause. See E. Fiumi, "Fioritura e decadenza dell'economia fiorentina," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* CXV (1957), 292–93. Cf. also G. Villani, V, 39; VIII, 71; *CapP,* XII, fols. 20r ff.; *LF,* XVII, f. 39r; XV, f. 24r; XIX, f. 104r; *CCE,* V, f. 101; *P,* XXXI, f. 7.

[9] *CapP,* XII, f. 20r; *Deposito Peruzzi de' Medici* (Aug. 12, 1305); *ibid.* (Feb. 29, 1308); *LF,* XV, f. 4; XVI, Part 2, f. 93; XVI, Part 2, f. 56; XVII, fols. 22, 192r; *P,* XXXI, f. 7; *LF,* XX, f. 18.

other characteristic they shared with families of this stripe. Lawyers were in short supply and in regular demand by the signory as advisers or consultants. Tommaso, like so many other members of near-great houses, satisfied the communal need for legal expertise. Ardently he championed the costly imperialistic program of the government until the fateful year 1337–38. Then, as prospects for victory receded, he, too, withdrew his support and became more and more critical of the faltering regime. He, too, exhorted the communal councils to elect Walter of Brienne as lord of the city—and shortly thereafter counseled that the despot's powers be prorogued. Late in 1342 he entered Walter's service as legal consultant. Ugo, another Altoviti, responded to the crisis of the early 1340's by seconding a bizzare measure presented to the communal council. These were days of panic and the usual Florentine pragmatic stance was sorely tested. The signory had proposed to the councils that Florence bestow an empty title to Lucca on King Robert of Naples—this at a moment when Florence was failing miserably in her contest with Pisa for domination over this strategically located prize city. Indeed this was a hollow bequest and hardly tempting to the Neapolitan monarch.[10]

The Antella, matriculated in the *Cambio* and the *Calimala,* point up yet another aspect of the history of these guildsmen who simultaneously served the government and furnished capital to the *camera.* Small by comparison with the Bardi or Strozzi, they possessed wealth and influence nonetheless. Entrenched in high positions, especially crucial fiscal posts, close to the King of Naples and the Holy See through international trade and banking services, the Antella survived charges of political heterodoxy in the early *trecento* and by the thirties were staunch protagonists of the signory—even to the extent of advocating much despised revenue proposals. The company and its partners, like other guild elite, subscribed to a series of communal loans and numbered among the fifteen or more most reliable fiscal props of the republic. By the late thirties and early forties, however, this house, and others like it, commenced to search for a solution to its own diminishing fortunes. Confronted with bankruptcy, their most articulate spokesman, Taddeo di Donato, veered toward the cause of despotism.

The plight of the Antella differed little from that of three hundred or more firms struggling to remain solvent during years when depression and default on the public debt undermined the confidence of both de-

[10] *CapP,* XII, f. 67r; *LF,* XIX, f. 111; XVI, Part 2, f. 79r; XXI, f. 95; XXII, f. 6r; *Esecutore,* XVII, f. 17r.

positors and creditors. One of Brienne's first acts in autumn, 1342, was to concede a moratorium on all debts to the hard-pressed Antella company. Taddeo di Donato's confidence in the despot was not misplaced, and beginning in November of that year he became one of the ruler's most trusted diplomats.[11]

The history of the Cocchi, who belonged to the *Lana,* with their politically active partner, Piero Baldovinetti; the Compagni; the Del Bene; the Paradisi; the Uzzano; and a dozen or so more clans from either *Lana, Cambio,* or *Calimala* is strikingly like that of the Antella. Communal creditors and policy makers, these houses were partisans of the numerous, expensive leagues of the 1330's formed to further Florentine dominion over Tuscany. Like the Antella they espoused extremely unpopular proposals made by the signory to impose forced loans on the inhabitants of the *contado* or to sell valuable state properties so that subsidies could be made to mercenaries soldiering for the Holy See. They, too, wholeheartedly embraced the alternative of dictatorship as a means of salvaging their personal fortunes and restoring public faith in the solvency of the fisc.[12]

November of 1340 witnessed the eruption of an abortive *coup d'état* by the most patrician and highly connected of all Florentine banking families—the house of Bardi. The activities of this family during the preceding half century reveal still another facet of the city's complex civic life. Although they and their business associates, the Frescobaldi, were aristocratic by *trecento* standards, they, too, were a clan "of small beginnings." Classified as magnates, they were ineligible for office in the signory. But disfranchisement was juridical and had little effect upon the social and economic status of these dynasts. Perhaps the richest of all clans, bankers to the kings of England, confidants of popes, the Bardi differed little from the Acciaiuoli, Frescobaldi, or Peruzzi. They were enmeshed in the politics of the thirties, serving in every important *balia* founded to conduct foreign policy or raise communal revenue. Nor did the fact that they were magnates hinder them from playing a decisive role as architects of public policy. Tax farmers, communal bankers, financial consultants, diplomats to the papal curia, representatives at the courts of England, France, and Naples, they advised the signory on all matters of public policy. Moreover, no other family, with the possible

[11] *CCE,* I bis, f. 161; A. Sapori, "Il quaderno dei creditori di Taddeo dell'Antella e compagni," *Rivista delle biblioteche e degli archivi,* III (1925), 159–60.
[12] Cf. *Missive,* V, f. 85; *P,* XXIV, f. 63; *CapP,* XII, f. 160; *LF,* XX, f. 83; XXII, f. 23.

exception of the Strozzi, advanced more capital to the regime during the thirties than the Bardi. Their credits in the public debt stood over 40,000 florins. This was a full 25 per cent of the total subscription of all inhabitants of the Santo Spirito quarter of the city. They were indeed, as Villani calls them, "ricchissimi mercatanti," and their *prestanze* entitled them to still another honor—first place among the communal fiscal oligarchs.[13]

Like that of their aristocratic peers the Bardi chronicle demonstrates the high correlation between degree of political influence and extent of financial contribution to the commune. The Bardi, too, made an abrupt about-face at the very end of the decade. Along with the Acciaiuoli, Frescobaldi, and Peruzzi, they had championed the costly wars in north Tuscany—perhaps because they believed that control of this region was a necessary condition for Florentine economic development. Further, the Bardi, Frescobaldi, and Peruzzi had hoped the acquisition of these lands would make trade with England and France more secure. But, in May of 1339, the situation was altered beyond recall. In that fateful month, Edward III suspended payment on loans contracted with the Bardi and Peruzzi companies; the total of this indebtedness approached the staggering sum of a million florins. Consequently the Bardi desired peace in Tuscany, but it was difficult to achieve, since Florence was committed to the costly Guelf alliance system with the King of Naples and the Holy Pontiff.

In November of 1340, the Bardi rebelled, hoping to extricate Florence from her expensive foreign commitments by overturning the Guelf alliance. Perhaps they harbored the illusion, certainly not unusual in the distraught city, that the republic might escape doom by allying with the Ghibelline Holy Roman Emperor instead of with the Guelf Holy See. The *coup* failed altogether. More important to our narrative, however, is that the Bardi, the Frescobaldi, the Nerli, the Tarlati, the Ubaldini, and the Ubertini were willing to risk patrimony and person to unseat

[13] *CCE,* I bis, f. 247r; *P,* XIII, f. 59r; XIV, fols. 138–49; *Diplomatico,* Strozzi (Mar. 14, 1324); *ibid.* (Sept. 18, 1321); *P,* X, f. 109; *CapP,* XII, fols. 48, 187; *LF,* XVII, f. 39r. For instances of loans by Bardi financiers to the commune, see *P,* XXIV, f. 63. For other examples of fiscal transactions with such luminaries as Charles of Calabria, conducted in conjunction with the house of Peruzzi, see *Diplomatico,* Deposito Peruzzi dei Medici (Apr. 30, 1326). With the late *dugento* the *Calimala* guild had come to be presided over by such renowned merchant families as the Bardi, Canigiani, Cerchi, Peruzzi, Spini. Cf. G. Filippi, *L'arte dei mercanti di Calimala* (Turin: 1889), pp. 46–49. The third volume of R. Davidsohn's *Forschungen* contains an abundance of data on these first families. Fundamental to any consideration of the role of the Bardi in the 1330's and early 1340's is A. Sapori's *La crisi delle compagnie,* especially pp. 104 ff.

the signory. The most recent monograph on the history of the Bardi indicates not only the complicity of numerous other pre-eminent clans but also that had the *coup* succeeded many more first families would have enlisted under the Bardi standard. This suggests that disaffection among aristocrats, mercantile and feudal, had become pervasive by the autumn of 1340.[14]

With mercantile fortunes as well as the communal fisc at their nadir in 1341--42, the Bardi who had not been exiled for their part in the *coup,* in the company of other aristocrats of the major guilds, used their influence to assist in establishing Walter of Brienne as despot of the city. Even before the coming of Brienne, the Bardi were well aware that Florence was destined for a revision of her faltering revenue system. They began at once to arrange their private affairs so that their patrimony would be minimally affected. Indeed, upon acquiring the imperium the despot did decree the *estimo.* He granted the Bardi important benefits in exchange for generous loans, and individual Bardi served as key figures in Brienne's administration.[15]

A myriad of satellite families orbited around the guild dynasts. The Baroncelli were partners of the Acciaiuoli and Peruzzi. They, too, were members of the inner councils of government, and Salvestro Baroncelli, most prominent of their number, held posts in several of the most prestigious military and financial *balie.* In September of 1342 he supported Brienne's tenure. Identical patterns of political behavior can be sketched for the Bandini, Bonaiuti, Giani, Salviati, and Valori. Taldo Valori was an associate of the Bardi company and had married into that most eminent of houses. After the abortive *coup* of 1340, he exerted every influence to mitigate the communal sentence against the Bardi insurrectionists. As a member of the acting signory he was able to forestall the harshest reprisals: a ban of exile on the entire family and confiscation of patrimony. Like his confreres he sat in The Twenty in 1341—thus the Bardi were indirectly represented—and in the following year opted for the lordship of Walter of Brienne. Only because his political activities

[14] Cf. particularly *ibid.,* pp. 117–41. Sapori illuminates the comments of Villani concerning both the conspiracy of the autumn of 1340 and the reorientation of Florentine foreign policy as a consequence of imminent business failures. Most relevant are chapters 118 and 136 of the eleventh book.

[15] For example, Simone Gerio Bardi served as an ambassador to neighboring Pisa for the conduct of delicate diplomatic negotiations, while Andrea held the post of *Podestà* for the *contado* of Arezzo. *CCE,* I bis, 247r; *P,* XXXIV, f. 3. Taddeo di Ridolfi Bardi was Brienne's hostage at Verona, and Angelo Gualtieri was ambassador to the Pope. *CCE,* IV, f. 66; *ibid.,* I bis, f. 247r.

show how a great company could continue to wield power even after the ban of exile had been imposed upon sixteen of their members does Taldo Valori detain our interest.[16]

Were we to detail the activities of key clans, the account of oligarchical activities would create a still drearier and more monotonous catalogue: the Ardinghelli sponsored measures to support interest rates of 15 per cent for holders of communal credits; the Biliotti, international traders, made many loans to the *camera;* the Brunelleschi were widely represented in *balie;* the Capponi swung from advocacy of the costly wars of the 1330's, to strong dissent from imperialism in 1340, to warm espousal of despotism in 1342. Suffice it to mention in passing two clans of the two hundred or so remaining first families of the republic. The Peruzzi and the Strozzi were in the vanguard of providers of capital for the communal treasury over the thirties. The former, like the Acciaiuoli and the Bardi, had won important trade concessions in the south of Italy, and their finances and interests were soon intermeshed with those of the Angevin Neapolitan monarchy and the papacy. Always available for financial counsel, and standing among the first creditors of the republic, they, too, saw despotism as the most viable solution to the collapse of public credit as well as to their own impending insolvency. The Strozzi ranked along with the Bardi as leading creditors of the commune, having advanced better than 20,000 florins to the republic between 1328 and 1342. This was almost one-sixth of all the capital provided the *camera* by the men of the Santa Maria Novella quarter of the city. Further, like so many other clans, they had extended numerous loans to rural communes and *popoli* so that they might pay their taxes to the central treasury at Florence. In addition, they had served the regime by investing part of their fortune in tax farming as well as in the purchase of shares in the salt monopoly.[17]

## II

To repeat Henry James's admonition: "The *whole* of anything is never told; you can only take what groups together." Some political activity in the thirties fell into no pattern. Some guild elite neither held political

[16] For this influential figure's ties with the house of Bardi, see *Monte,* S. Giovanni (1347), f. 929. Cf. also *P,* XXXI, fols. 7–9.

[17] Cf. P. J. Jones, "Florentine Families and Florentine Diaries," *op. cit.,* pp. 186–90; G. Brucker, *Florentine Politics and Society,* pp. 32–33. For additional materials on the political and economic contributions of this clan to the polis, see *LF,* XVII, fols. 84r, 181r; XXII, f. 36r; *CapP,* XII, f. 5; *P,* XXIV, f. 63; *CCE,* I bis, f. 15r; *LF,* XIX, f. 16r; *CCE,* I bis, f. 101.

opinions nor provided support consistent with the rank and file of the patriciate. Upon occasion scions of leading houses railed against giving the signory carte blanche in foreign affairs or against the inequities of an anachronistic tributary system. There were council sessions when an isolated speaker would favor jettisoning the system and relying more on direct levies. Gabelles, generally so pleasing to the well-to-do, did not always find favor with each patrician. More serious for sustaining political power was the appointment of special judicial officers during the mid-thirties. To compound the difficulties of those in the signory bent on maintaining a modicum of law and order there was in each of the communal councils a hard core of the membership who could be relied upon to veto any and all measures.[18] Yet although this opposition generated tension, it rarely altered the outcome. Perhaps its principal effect was to prevent oligarchical rule from hardening and becoming monolithic by keeping it more cautious and circumspect, at least in legislative proposals.

The oligarchical tendencies of the guild patriciate were underscored by the very limited political mobility. Few newcomers who participated in the life of the polis ever reached the exalted position of prior, and those who did were the most affluent. Like their patrician superiors, they had served as tax farmers, advanced capital to the government, and constituted the commune's principal rate payers. One such family—typical of those of recent political vintage—was the Tolosini. They first entered the signory in 1318, and over the next twenty years were ever more active as officials in charge of the sale of communal gabelles, making restitution of interest to communal creditors, and supervising the republic's fiscal program in the *contado*. Their government credits were indeed impressive: a single member of this house, Andrea, held claims worth approximately four thousand florins, and the firm of Guido Tolosini was among the select few who advanced short-term loans to the *camera*. The Baldesi, merchants with close ties to Church and *Parte Guelfa*, also entered the signory about the same time. Like the Tolosini they occupied influential posts in the *balie* of the thirties and rendered financial advice. Their loans to the government between 1326 and 1342 stood at 4,944 florins.

[18] Spokesmen were vociferous in objecting to any measure calculated to enhance the jurisdiction of a magistrate, no matter how modest the authorization might be. Moreover, there was a pervasive reluctance to augment the scope of public control over remote districts of the Florentine domains. We might bear in mind that disaffection for these proposals was more pronounced in the Council of the Commune, where the magnates had representation.

The Asini, the Davizzi, and the Pantaleoni had even more recently entered the arena of communal politics from the world of the greater guilds, and although they did not exercise the political authority of the aforementioned houses, they, too, made their private patrimonies available to the public fisc at lucrative rates of interest.[19]

To this mélange of new families must be added two other groups: the many notaries who staffed the communal bureaucracy, moving from minor office to minor office, and the limited number of lesser guildsmen, men of the *arti minori* (bakers, butchers, vintners) who gained entry first into the advisory councils to the signory and finally into the priorate. These two groups were anxious to support the petitions and even the informal requests of the guild oligarchs. Notaries counseled measures to grant judicial dispensation to magnates; vintners advised approval of the diverse activities of oligarchical *balie;* hosiers seconded enactments calling for the imposition of forced loans; butchers were in agreement with the policy of exempting major guildsmen from taxes; ironmongers spoke on behalf of requests from patrician creditors for restitution. Further, many of these notaries and *minori* were among the commune's principal creditors.[20] Concord was not always the rule, and the *minori* demurred vigorously if a proposal was contrary to the interests of their particular guild. However, the patriciate, with their tight control of both the electoral machinery and procedures, co-opted only those lesser guildsmen whose outlook and interests were similar to theirs, and the number of

[19] On the holdings of such new clans as the Asini, Dini, Tolosini, see *Monte,* S. Croce (1347), *passim.* For the Baldesi and the Davizzi, see *Monte,* S. Maria Novella (1347), f. 33 and f. 417, respectively. On the contribution of the Pantaleoni, see *Monte,* S. Giovanni (1347), f. 489r, and *Monte,* S. Maria Novella (1345), f. 915. Despite the magnitude of loans made by these *novi cives* families between 1326 and 1343, they were not sizable when compared to the *prestanze* paid into the treasury by those veritable fiscal props of the *camera*—the ubiquitous Bardi. The latter had advanced better than a quarter of all monies paid by the inhabitants of their section of the city. The quota for the S. Spirito quarter of Florence stood at 129,151 florins, of which the Bardi had donated some 31,385 florins. Cf. *Monte,* S. Spirito (1347), *passim.* After 1343, however, the contribution of the new citizens began to climb, until by the 1350's their share was almost equal to that of the patriciate. It should also be mentioned that the number of magnates making short-term loans to the *camera* had declined dramatically by the fifties, so that patrician influence was further weakened. Cf. *CCE,* Vols. XLVII–XLVIII (1353); *CCE,* Vol. LIV (1354).

[20] Better than 50 per cent of the communal notaries were *novi cives,* and their loans to the *camera* from the late 1320's through the early 1340's averaged a respectable 70 florins. Among the membership of this very essential cadre of communal society there was not the range we might discover among other strata of the guild world. Judging from their *prestanze,* their position might best be described as middle middle-class. The dyers, for example, might be represented by one of their number whose contributions to the public fisc stood well above 2,000 florins; the bulk of these *minori* paid only modest *prestanze.*

notaries and *minori* in the priorate at one time was so trifling that defense of their interests was much diluted.

Gherardus Barzie spoke in favor of giving power to four of the oligarchs to conduct delicate diplomatic negotiations for the commune. The butcher Andrea Benis counseled in favor of absolving *minori* and the *arti minori* from certain levies. Something of the current anticlericalism was expressed when a certain Lapi advocated that Florentines who had attacked the papal legate should be liberated from prison and freed of all condemnations. The vintner, Giambone di Guido, was always a firm supporter of the oligarchy, ever speaking for grants of power to unpopular *balie* such as The Twenty. Agostino Cocchi, hosier, very active in the council halls, displayed deep concern for the solvency of the republic and spoke on behalf of communal revenue measures. Many *novi cives* served on bankruptcy commissions handling the assets of defaulting companies or of delinquent individuals who had contracted to farm communal taxes. Others called for restitution of loans to patricians, and a certain Giovanni even testified as to the innocence of a certain rural magnate before the membership of the councils of the republic.[21]

In most matters the gentle paideia prevailed, and the *novi cives* were warm subscribers to the concept of government by consensus. However, in addition to the firm support of their *minori* interests—should the *novi cives* be members of lesser guilds—there was a substantial discrepancy between their views and those of the patriciate. Strong dissents were registered by such leading newcomers as the hosier Dino Chele, the vintner Piero Duranti, and others on the theme of public finance. Interest rates for short-term loans were considered too high. This was a portent of things to come, for between 1343 and 1348, when the *novi cives* were at the apex of their influence, rates were cut to a new low of 5 per cent. There were numerous objections to the inadequacy of the fiscal base, and Dino Chele's voice was heard in behalf of raising money by means of an *estimo* instead of by new imposts and forced loans.[22]

## III

The 1330's was the last decade of undisputed oligarchical hegemony. Nor does it appear insignificant that the unchallenged tenure of these

[21] Cf. *Libri Fabarum,* particularly Vols. XIII, XV, XVII, and XVIII, to trace the political careers of these lesser guildsmen in considerable detail. For additional materials on the most vocal of their number, see *CapP,* Vol. XII and *CCE,* Vol. 1 bis.

[22] *LF,* XIII, Part 2, f. 19r; *CapP,* XII, f. 107r; *LF,* XIII, Part 2, fols. 70r, 83–85; *CCE,* I bis, f. 108r.

*ottimati* from the city's top guilds coincides almost perfectly with the very peak of fourteenth-century Florentine prosperity. If we accept the renowned and so often verified statistics furnished by the chronicler Giovanni Villani for the biennium 1336–38, then certainly the economy throve as never before.[23] Communal income from indirect taxes stood at an all-time high. The returns from the customs toll had just reached the imposing sum of 90,000 florins a year, surely possible only in a vigorous economy. Comparable records were being set by almost every other major gabelle in the arsenal. Taxes on wine, salt, meat, contracts, were all at their peak yield. Even more convincing was the population total reported by Villani. Never again was the Florentine census to stand so high. Further, there appears to be a definite correlation between city population and the customs toll. In 1338, the last year of Florentine prosperity, there were 90,000 inhabitants residing within the city walls and the customs toll (*gabella portarum*) was 90,200 florins, averaging 1 florin per person. As the population declined, so did this key tax. Over subsequent decades its fluctuation corresponds almost perfectly with the census. A comparable pattern can be observed for other crucial imposts.[24]

The onset of prosperity, at least in the public sector of the economy, might be located tentatively during January-February of 1329, when communal income registered better than 120,000 lire, a prepossessing figure for so slack a time of year. March-April as well as May-June saw this figure sustained. Although there are no records of returns for the balance of the year, in January-February of 1330 the *entrata* totaled 186,329 lire, 18 soldi, 7 denari; never before had such a figure been recorded for this season. Returns from a limited number of communal gabelles for 1334 suggest that this condition persisted.[25]

As long as income from direct levies abounded, the credit of the commune stood firm; thus it was possible for the treasury to borrow sizable sums from first families to finance new military ventures. The thirties mark the resurgence of an intensified Florentine imperialism directed toward the annexation—through statecraft, purchase, and, finally, warfare—of Lucca and its territories.

So ambitious a program soon brought Florence into confrontation with her powerful, and by now embittered, neighbors. In order to secure Lucca the Florentines were compelled to challenge the Pisan authority on the north Tuscan littoral. There was mounting antagonism against Verona,

[23] Cf. n. 3.

[24] M. Becker, "Florentine Popular Government (1343–1348)," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, CVI (1962), 368 ff.

[25] *Diplomatico*, Cestello (May 31, 1331); *P*, XXVI, f. 44r.

with whom the republic had had bootless and costly diplomatic dealings. Verona's Della Scala lords held title to Lucca, and Florence was to expend a quarter million florins in a vain effort to induce Verona to surrender her prize. To this end Florence contracted an extravagant and futile alliance with Venice.

To these expenses must be added the heroic contributions of the republic to the depleted treasury of the Guelf alliance system. As early as 1332 the Florentines had joined the League of Lombardy against the armies of the Ghibelline imperial party. She placed 600 knights in the field against the northern invaders. Such a host was three times greater than that furnished by the Gonzaga of Mantua or the Este of Ferrara and equal in number to the troops furnished by the much larger states of Milan and the Kingdom of Naples. Nor did this drain on Florentine resources abate: other alliances, equally beguiling and expensive, were formed, and Florence was compelled to commit still more of her capital and energy to a spate of bootless causes.

Despite such lavish outlays, the ruling elite continued to pursue a relaxed and casual course of government. They diverted revenues from the principal gabelles to the communal creditors, giving the latter 10 or 15 per cent interest, until the strain on the treasury became unbearable. Only as a last resort did they attempt to formulate constructive policies. In the early thirties they had allotted the merest trickle of funds to meet the ordinary expenses of government, using up income to support the inflated loan structure. By the early forties the commune was already far in arrears even in her payment of salaries to the communal bureaucracy and the judiciary. Thereupon the *camera* was obliged to engage in the humiliating practice of repossessing part of the salary through the device of forced loans. Even the monies to be furnished Florentine hostages for living expenses in foreign cities where they were stationed had to be appropriated for other purposes.[26]

Notwithstanding mounting crises and a series of disasters, from England's default on loans in 1339 to the defeat of the Florentine armies by Pisa in 1341, patricians continued to be recipients of judicial largesse. In addition to dispensation from convictions for all manner of trivial offenses they went scot-free for crimes as grave as murder and high treason. This was done by overwhelming vote of both communal councils. Even

[26] On the repossession of sizable parts of communal salaries, particularly from captains of mercenary companies, see *CCE,* I bis, fols. 6r–7. Cf. also *P,* XXXII, fols. 60 ff.; *LF,* XXII, f. 63r; XXIV, f. 18; XXV, f. 39; *DP,* IV, f. 56r; *P,* XXXIV, f. 1.

when magnates were found guilty, the courts tended to mete out low fines. If we compare condemnations paid in the year 1334 (a year for which records are ample), when the oligarchs dominated, with those of a decade later, when popular government was installed, the disparity is immense. In the earlier period the average fine for each magnate offense was 300 lire; in the later period it was 3,000. Further, in 1344 the liability for high crimes was extended even to remote kinsmen. Thus, some 60 members of the house of Bardi were held liable for the offenses of one consort.[27]

Under an oligarchy, courts prefer justice by admonition and exhortation instead of the impartial and harsh regimen of law practiced by the popular signory. In 1334 the magistrates exerted every influence to settle litigation between contending parties to avoid exacting the full penalty. For example, a fine by the *podestà* or the executor of 200 lire might be reduced to 30 lire if the plaintiff concurred. Standard procedure was to require the defendant to pay only 15 per cent of the original condemnation if the plaintiff agreed. Such compromises became exceedingly rare after the regime was democratized in 1343. The same tendency to leniency was manifest in court dealings with the pariahs of the Florentine guild world—bankrupts and usurious pawnbrokers.[28] As has been noted, these practices emphasize the separation of public and private morality characteristic of oligarchy.

Nowhere is this gentle sway better illustrated than in the casual enforcement of communal sumptuary ordinances prohibiting men and women from adorning themselves in ostentatious apparel and precious jewels or of additional legislation outlawing sending costly gifts, lavish banquets, and elaborate weddings. During the thirties convictions on these counts averaged slightly less than two per month, whereas after 1343 they became commonplace. Condemnations for other breaches of the "good customs" of the republic displayed a comparable pattern. In the earlier decade only a few Florentine prostitutes were apprehended for plying their trade—"hateful in the sight of God and man"—outside certain prescribed areas of the city or for failing to wear the badge of their pro-

[27] During the thirties it was indeed commonplace to discover that sentences and condemnations were rescinded "vigore pacis," consummated by defendant and plaintiff. Cf. *CCE,* I, fols. 14 ff. Contrast the light verdicts directed against magnates recorded in this volume with the severe ones meted out after the early forties. *Ibid.,* VI, fols. 72–89; VII, fols. 115–17; XVII, fols. 6r ff.; *P,* XXXIII, f. 43.

[28] For examples of judicial dispensation conferred upon these "manifest" usurers, despite conviction on a charge of fraud, see *CCE,* I bis, f. 94. For an instance of communal largesse in the treatment of bankrupts, see *GA,* CXXII, Part 3, f. 15.

fession. After 1343, however, they experienced the full fury of communal law and were driven, half naked, through the streets by bailiffs armed with whips.[29]

The separation of public and private morality under the oligarchical signory had other practical implications. Despite stringent legislation against gambling, for instance, games of chance were allowed in certain Florentine territories. The reasons were economic: gambling in such places as Pistoia served to increase the consumption of wine and thus to increase communal income from the wine gabelle. In 1343, when gambling was prohibited in these same territories, returns from the tax on the retail sale of wine declined by as much as one-third.[30]

In the enforcement of the republic's antimonopoly legislation the gap between theory and practice became a veritable chasm. According to the communal statutes in force throughout the thirties, all members of the guilds were liable for prosecution for violating antimonopoly statutes. Yet in reality they were enforced exclusively against keepers of small shops, petty artisans, and venders of foodstuffs.[31] In the judgment of the Florentine courts, then, antimonopoly laws were only a device for maintaining price ceilings on services, foodstuffs, and wares sold for domestic consumption. Immunity was the order of the day for the guild patriciate.

Immediately upon the death of Charles of Calabria in 1328, the oligarchical signory was invested by the communal councils with authority to prosecute bakers whose prices were higher than fixed by law. Shortly thereafter, in 1332, a special magistrate was appointed by the signory with the sole duty of enforcing antimonopoly legislation. Three notaries, two knights, and eight bailiffs were to assist him. When the magistrate and his minions set about their task, they left the men of the *arti maggiori* undisturbed. Their energies and authority were exercised against only the lesser guildsmen and small tradesmen of the city. In a single month, thirty-five of these petty traffickers were fined an average of twelve lire, ten soldi apiece (the equivalent of several months' rent on a small shop) for selling goods and services at prices above prescribed ceilings. But no *maggiori* were cited for monopolistic practices. Over the early thirties,

[29] U. Dorini, *Il diritto penale e la delinquenza in Firenze nel secolo XIV* (Lucca: 1916), pp. 69–74; M. Becker, "Florentine Popular Government," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 381–82.

[30] *Balia*, II, f. 57 (Feb. 27, 1343).

[31] Cf. *LF*, XV, f. 95 (Dec. 21, 1330); *P*, XXV, f. 47 (Jan. 12, 1329); *CCE*, I, f. 8 (July 3, 1334).

the term "monopoly" had been divested of any ethical or Christian connotation.[32]

At precisely this moment we discover another evidence of the same ethos. It was felt that meetings of day laborers, even though for social or even religious purposes, might incite monopolistic practices, such as a demand for higher wages. Any religious brotherhood (*fratellanza*) was suspect because it might promote unionism among the workers, and this would indeed be monopolistic.[33] Other communal legislation was also stringently enforced against lesser tradesmen and artisans, though seldom if ever against the great guildsmen. In June of 1341, 134 bakers were ordered to pay the sizable fine of 3,475 lire, 10 soldi, 9 denari to the communal treasury for violating the ordinance against exporting grain beyond the republic's boundaries. For identical offenses, *maggiori* and great estate-owners might be summoned into court, convicted, and then have the verdict mitigated by direct action of the communal councils. They would pay small fees, usually a trifling percentage of the condemnation, into the *camera*. In similar ways they avoided full fines for smuggling salt, exporting viands to a foreign city in time of famine, or for failing to pay the wine gabelle or the sacred gabelle on all legal instruments requiring a notary's seal.[34]

It might be instructive to examine the actions taken by the communal councils during two consecutive sessions held in May of 1341.[35] These two sittings are in no way atypical; the same inferences could be drawn from the records of 100 such meetings. A member of the Arrighetti banking family (*Cambio*) had recently been declared bankrupt and his name, in accord with statutory requirements, removed from the guild matricula. Upon payment of a petty sum he was restored to guild membership and reinstated as a banker and guild member in good standing. A rural magnate from the prominent house of Manettaccio di Lucardo had been fined 3,000 lire on the charge of inciting a riot, 4,000 lire for attacking a commoner with a deadly weapon, and finally, 1,600 lire for assault. Upon payments of a small fraction of the grand total of 8,600 lire, the three verdicts were rescinded.

[32] M. Becker, "La esecuzione della legislazione contro le pratiche monopolistiche," *op. cit.*, pp. 8–22.
[33] A. Sapori, "I secoli d'oro del mercante di Firenze," *Il Trecento* (Florence: 1953), 185–87; N. Rodolico, *I Ciompi* (Florence: 1945), pp. 12 ff.
[34] *DP*, II, f. 50.
[35] *LF*, XIX, fols. 178–87r; XX, fols. 43r–55r.

The next order of business was a petition on behalf of a Gherardini, a member of one of the most eminent magnate houses. He had been fined 2,000 lire and exiled by the vicar of the Duke of Calabria for assault against a commoner. His noble kinsmen who submitted the petition obtained remission from the sentence, and their consort was allowed to return from exile after paying a paltry fine. How different was the response to efforts of Durante, son of the minor guildsman Salvino. He had been found guilty of assaulting one of the scions of a prominent magnate family, the Rossi. The petition failed to win the support of the councils with a verdict of "non obtinuit." Nor was remission granted to Cione di Bustichi, another citizen of lowly station and little consequence. He had been sentenced to death for creating a disturbance ("tumultum") when he harangued a mob ("congregationem gentium"), inciting them to burn the volumes of Florentine tax records. He was tried in absentia, and it was decided that this verdict should not be altered.[36]

Two magnates from the rural house of Squarcialupi of Poggibonsi were more fortunate. They had been condemned for two grave military delinquencies: first, refusal to pay special imposts levied to provision troops, and second, for absenting themselves from service in the rural militia in time of the war. Notwithstanding harsh sentences by the tribunals of the republic, the councils acted summarily to award them dispensation. Three others from the same magnate house, convicted on a charge of mass assault upon a commoner with deadly weapons, were likewise rewarded. Another from the same family was the beneficiary of communal largesse although he had neglected to pay his rural *estimo* for well over a decade. The Guidone, another magnate clan, were also granted dispensation despite their long-standing failure to pay the gabelle levied on the country nobility.[37]

A *scioperato* (one who matriculates in a guild for political or social purposes but does not ply a trade) had been fined 500 lire for failure to pay his *prestantiam scioperatorum* and was granted dispensation. So did citizens convicted of giving aid to the magnate, Gherardini, during an attempted homicide and rural families of good standing who illegally

[36] *GA,* CXXII, Part 3, f. 25. Contrast the severity with which the petition of this *minuto* was treated with the hundreds of instances of judicial dispensation granted patrician families at this time. Cf. *Ibid.,* f. 125r; "Registro dei Magnati Condannati." Since the signory was most anxious to induce lawless and obdurate patricians to make peace, it preferred private settlement to the bruising impact of public law. Cf. *Archivio Notarile,* A. 983, f. 25r, C. 102, f. 82.

[37] Cf. M. Becker, "A Study in Political Failure: The Florentine Magnates," to be published in *Mediaeval Studies.*

appropriated the holdings of pious foundations or encroached upon communal rights and property.[38]

The last order of business on the crowded council agenda was the disposition of a petition by the kinsmen of the worker Francesco Corsellini. This day laborer had been tried in absentia and convicted of the most hienous of all crimes—the theft of a piece of wool from the shop of a master of the *Arte della Lana.* Needless to say, the verdict on the petition presented for this *popolo minuto* was "non obtinuit."[39]

The dynasts of the greater guilds acted in the communal councils to perpetuate what might be characterized as a "welfare state" for the *haute bourgeoisie* and magnates of the republic.[40] These *maiores et potentes,* largely from the *Cambio, Calimala,* and *Lana,* not only controlled the principal offices of the commune, but when they relinquished these elected posts upon conclusion of their tenure they continued to serve as *sapientes;* thus they advised the signory on policy questions and rendered opinions on a great variety of matters, from the correct procedures to be employed in countering petty vexations of local clergy, to the signing of treaties and alliances with the great states and princes. They formulated and directed the communal monetary program, and it was from their ranks that advisers to the communal mint were selected. It was the consuls and rectors of these guilds who were regularly summoned if the signory had an especially thorny fiscal problem. In the company of the chiefs of the silk guild, judges, and notaries, they were authorized to review the statutes of all the guilds of the city; any alteration or addition to these statutes required their approval. *Calimala* and *Lana* controlled the office of weights and measures, and *Lana,* with the assistance of the consuls of the *Por Santa Maria* (silk guild), filled the posts of protectors of communal properties. Generally, the hire of communal troops was

[38] Cf. *Ibid.*

[39] *GA,* CXXIV, Part 1, f. 88r; Part 4, f. 16; Part 5, f. 3r. Such harsh justice stands in dramatic contrast to the lenient behavior of a special communal council composed of 140 well-born and affluent Florentines empowered to determine whether or not the judiciary of the republic should proceed with the trial of accused magnates. Such clans as the Bardi and Della Tosa were liberated from grave accusations on grounds that the plaintiff had been inspired "calumniously." *CapP,* XII, f. 171 (Jan. 27, 1337); *LF,* XVII, f. 11r (May 9, 1338); XVI, Part 1, f. 18 (July 12, 1333).

[40] A recent study suggests that two-thirds of all communal revenues during this period were acquired through taxes that were regressive and therefore bore most heavily upon those least able to pay. Cf. E. Fiumi, "Sui rapporti tra città contado," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* CXIV (1956), 30. The men of the greater guilds were also in a position to impose effective controls on urban rents, and of course their influence was keenly felt whenever communal authorities established price ceilings on goods and services. Cf. A Doren, *Le arti fiorentine* (Florence: 1940), II, 25 ff.

supervised by the *Calimala, Cambio,* and *Lana.* So was the importing of grain. Most significant, they held absolute authority over the Court Merchant. This tribunal had jurisdiction over most of the litigation between guildsmen, and it is well to remember that in the later Middle Ages willingness to go to law was chronic—the debt cunning owed to honor. Furthermore, the Court Merchant acted as a deliberative body; merchants, bankers, and industrialists who had suffered maltreatment in foreign lands could petition for redress of grievances. The *maggiori* sitting on the bench of this august tribunal decided whether reprisals were in order.[41] Thus the major guilds had great influence over the commune's foreign policy.

Not surprisingly, the masters of the lesser guilds (bakers, butchers, vintners, tanners) fared less well under the oligarchical signory. The mortality rate on *minori* petitions was inordinately high—95 per cent as compared to less than 5 per cent for the *maggiori.* Most *minori* requests vetoed by the councils were either for reduction in excise taxes or sales taxes on goods and services produced for domestic consumption. It was not until August of 1342, just before the installation of Brienne as dictator, that the pleas of vintners, grocers, and butchers for rate reduction were received favorably.[42]

The *maggiori* did much more than simply deny *minori* petitions; they actively tried to undermine the strength of the lesser guilds. They promulgated laws strictly circumscribing the jurisdiction and authority of

[41] Perhaps the most critical area of *maggiori* control was that of communal monetary policy. The cloth merchants of the wool guild permitted the *moneta di piccioli,* or silver currency, to depreciate, with the result that the gold florin rose in value in terms of *piccioli.* This was advantageous to the *lanaiuoli,* since they received payment for their cloth in gold while paying their employees in silver coinage. According to the *Statute* of the *Podestà,* only the masters of the greater guilds were permitted to use the gold florin as the standard of value in their business transactions and to keep their books in this monetary unit. Cf. *Statuti,* XV, Bk. III, f. 16r; G. Brucker and M. Becker, "The *Arti Minori* in Florentine Politics, 1342–1378," *Mediaeval Studies,* XVIII (1956), 98; R. de Roover, "The Story of the Alberti Company of Florence, 1302–1348," *op. cit.,* p. 16. Scarcely a matter of secondary importance was the question of granting reprisals. Here again decision was in the hands of the greater guildsmen. Cf. *P,* V, f. 63r; XIX, f. 21r. It should also be noted that the major guilds tended to control the election of the officials over rebels' property. Cf. *Ibid.,* XVII, f. 2r. Whenever a provision of the republic interfered with the objectives of a particular great *arte,* such as *Lana* or *Por S. Maria,* the consuls might petition the signory for a waiver of the statutory requirement. Moreover, there was a substantial margin in favor of their petition being accepted. Cf. *LF,* XXI, f. 11r; *DP,* III, f. 12.

[42] *DP,* III, 9r (Aug. 7, 1342). For repeated rejections of requests by butchers, stonemasons, grocers, see *CapP,* XII, fols. 3, 41; *LF,* XIII, Part 2, f. 73r; XVI, Part 2, fols. 37, 55; XVII, fols. 38, 144r.

the consuls of the city's fourteen lesser guilds. These same laws permitted and even encouraged appeals from verdicts of *minori* courts to tribunals on which lesser guildsmen had no representation, such as the Court Merchant. In addition, fragmentation of minor guilds was promoted so that small-scale producers and purveyors of services would be removed from the supervision of *minori* consuls and incorporated into the juridical orbit of the greater guilds.[43]

Despite the restiveness and occasional resentment of such affluent masters of the *arti minori* as the dyers, control over the many crafts auxiliary to the great Florentine wool industry continued to be vested in the hands of a powerful officer selected by the *Lana* entrepreneurs. Decisions made by this "official foreigner" were never subject to review by communal authorities. Subsidiary craftsmen and artisans of the *Lana* were permitted no appeal from decisions of *maggiori* officers; nor had they any voice in resolving the thousand petty questions concerning the practice of their metier, such as whether salaries of artisans and craftsmen should be paid in merchandise or in cash, liability for damaged goods, or proper disposal of cloth remnants. Scrupulous syndication and meticulous review of all accounts presented to the communal treasury by *minori* gave the *maggiori* tight control over these lesser guilds. A commission of seven men elected by the greater guilds was enjoined by the signory to examine *minori* matriculae and other records periodically. This commission was authorized to cancel any enactment incompatible with the interests of the *arti maggiori* and to remove the name of any recalcitrant or seditious lesser guildsman from a given matricula.[44]

The Acciaiuoli, Alberti, Bardi, Del Bene, Frescobaldi, Peruzzi, and other dynasts would not be displeased by policies that so successfully identified the well-being of the commune with their own prosperity. Nor was this equation unpopular with the second-rung families who sat in

[43] It was not to be until 1372 that *minori* were to be permitted to sit in the sacrosanct *Mercanzia*. Cf. G. Bonolis, *La giurisdizione della Mercanzia in Firenze nel secolo XIV* (Florence: 1901), p. 82. For the petition that initiated this legislation, see *CP,* XII, f. 20 (Apr. 21, 1372). On the theme of the extension of *maggiori* jurisdiction over auxiliary craftsmen and producers, see *P,* VI, f. 90r (Aug. 8, 1296); *Seta,* I, fols. 61, 66–66r (1335).

[44] For additional examples of *maggiori* domination, see *Seta,* I, fols. 22–64, and *Uffiziali di Grascia,* II, f. 17, in which requirements for posting security with the consuls of the major guilds guaranteeing the faithful execution of work and the fulfillment of contracts is discussed. On this and related topics, see N. Rodolico, *Il popolo minuto* (Bologna: 1899), pp. 131 ff., and *I Ciompi,* pp. 23 ff. *Maggiori* approval of the statutes of minor guilds was sanctioned both by the provisions of the commune and the *statuti* of the particular *arte* in question. Cf. *Legnaioli,* I, f. 30; *P,* VIII, f .70r.

the communal councils over the late 1320's and 1330's. Theirs was the prerogative to veto proposals, which they could do by a vote of only one-third of those present.

The Angiolieri sat regularly in the Council of the People, and this *Cambio* family supported the government fiscal program with its high interest-bearing loans and many foreign policy decisions dictated by the Court Merchant and the great bankers. The Baroni of the *Lana,* another second-string family, also backed such policies, and either nominated an Acciaiuoli, Bardi, or Peruzzi for high office or seconded such a choice from the floor of the Council of the People. Ser Priore Bartoli (who, despite the title "Ser" designating him as a notary, was also a silk merchant) was scion of a family long associated with the influential Peruzzi. Except for the few matters pertaining to the special prerogatives of his own guild, Ser Priore was a firm partisan of the elite whenever guild dynasts presented measures for approval by his confreres in the Council of the People. The Borghesi of the *Cambio* were another family of loyal followers who played a crucial role in the decisions of the *balia* of The Twenty. They emerged from the rank and file of the Council of the People as financial consultants and tax advisers to the signory and eventually were charged by the signory with the delicate task of reconciling differences among citizens. The Bonaiuti, partners in the house of Bardi, and a dozen or more families were called upon periodically to explain electoral procedure to the assembly or even draw up new laws when the Council of the People was in session.[45]

The Cavalcanti stand as exemplars of the many magnate families active at this time in the Council of the Commune. For the greater part of the fourteenth century this body was composed of 200 members, one-fifth of whom were required by law to be magnates. The Council of the People was less aristocratic, since there were no magnates among its 300 members. The Cavalcanti were firm supporters of the signory's domestic and foreign policy. They spoke in the Council of the Commune on behalf of sweeping legislation authorizing the signory to hire additional troops. More important, they advocated that key officials be chosen by the signory and then be allowed to serve without being syndicated—that is, without having their actions in office reviewed by a special commission. Further, they supported trade proposals of the Court Merchant as well as the chancy alliances with Genoa and Venice proposed by the signory in the

[45] For the political careers of these families, see especially the following volumes: *CapP,* XII; *LF,* XIV–XXI; *P,* XXIV–XXXII and CCXVI.

late thirties. The Gherardini, another magnate clan, had long been entrusted by the signory with the administration of the republic's property and monies. Betto, Niccolo, and Giovanni Cione explained, and even defended the prevailing system of *prestanze* before their magnate confreres in the council. Giovanni of the magnate house of Gianfigliazzi, a member in the revenue commission of Sixteen and a key figure in the special *balia* elected to conclude a system of alliances with north Italian states, urged support for Florentine foreign policy and for the fiscal proposals of the oligarchs designed to implement it. Among the more eminent magnate speakers in the Council of the Commune were the Rossi; Fantone and Barna each held posts in special war *balie.* Both addressed the councils on behalf of legislation to increase the signory's authority for conducting foreign affairs.[46]

Never was there any dearth of speakers to orate on the merits of guild privileges and immunities or to explain the need for raising interest payments on *prestanze.* Butchers, grocers, spicers, as well as patricians, could be relied upon to urge the repeal of any ancient distraints on the *arti,* major or minor. Families such as the Filicaia, procurators for the Peruzzi company, together with the Jacobi, the Giani, the Miglore, the Ricci, and the Rondinelli exhorted the councils to support high interest rates on all government loans during the thirties.[47] (At this time rates oscillated between 10 and 20 per cent, averaging 15.) Many championed special economic concessions for those who farmed communal gabelles. Nor was there any lack of support for pleas by the creditors of the republic that income from customs tolls or from the gabelle on contracts be set aside in favor of restitution of interest—20 per cent—on short-term war loans. There were always voices in either council to second the proposal that the actions of a certain fiscal *balia* not be subject to review but that the *balia* be given carte blanche to transact the economic business of government. Further, councilors who were ever prepared to exhort the signory to seek revenue for the repayment of *prestanze* seldom were willing to vote the necessary authorization for new revenue measures.

Perhaps the contention that this was a regimen undone by its virtues is

[46] On the magnate house of Cavalcanti, see *P,* XI, f. 190r; *LF,* XIII, Part 1, f. 22r; XVI, Part 1, f. 18r; XVI, Part 2, f. 34r; XVII, f. 9; *CCE,* I bis, f. 103r; *Atti del Esecutore,* XVII, 17r. For the Gherardini, see *CapP,* XII, f. 67r; *LF,* XVI, Part 2, f. 81; XVII, f. 45; XIX, f. 91; *P,* XXIV, f. 27. For the career of Giovanni Gianfigliazzi and others of of this clan, see *LF,* XVII, fols. 39r, 180; XVI, Part 1, f. 18r; *DP,* III, f. 22r; *CapP,* XII, f. 8r; *DP,* IV, f. 1.

[47] For these houses, see *LF,* XVII, fols. 21–22; *CapP,* XII, for particular examples of statements before the councils, see *CapP,* XII, f. 283; *LF,* XVIII, f. 1.

more than a metahistorical pronouncement. For so strenuously did the signory attempt to serve the aspirations and interests of the top echelons of Florentine society and so successful were they in this gentle but herculean effort that when crises mounted and sacrifice was imperative, communal councilors were so habituated to casual rule that they were unable to respond. The regime had been so solicitous of privilege and immunity, so unwilling to encroach upon the preserve of guild, church, *Parte Guelfa,* or religious confraternity, that the councilors had become acclimated to government by compromise and could muster at best a tepid response to imminent disaster. In certain areas, such as the extension of citizenship to newcomers, the signory was much more progressive than the councils. But its policies came to naught when the conservative Council of the Commune vetoed a series of proposals formulated to liberalize Florentine citizenship requirements.[48] If the signory offered little leadership, the councils appear to have desired even less.

## IV

Popular government with its commitment to reform and moderate democratization, and despotism with its penchant for impersonal government, had always been short-lived experiments in communal Florence. As responses to the onset of depression at home or the pyramiding of calamities abroad, each had involved an assault upon certain privileges of the guild patriciate. Once the crisis abated, wealth, influence, and, not least, corporate organization (the *arti,* the *Parte Guelfa,* the religious confraternity) always permitted the patriciate to resume sway over the signory.

The years immediately following the death of Charles of Calabria in 1328 were the scene of just such an unimaginative but comfortable political restoration. Distasteful enactments like levies on the guilds and direct taxation of urban real estate and capital were soon revoked. What is more, the oligarchical signory promised to abandon all such loathsome expedients in favor of much milder remedies. Within two years the casual atmosphere of the communal councils matched the easy tone of the signory; gone were the political tensions and hostilities of recent times.

[48] The two most obdurate opponents of grants of citizenship were Giovanni Pino Rossi and Bindo della Tosa, both of whom were magnates. Cf. *LF,* XIII, f. 16r; XIX, f. 164. The last petition requesting citizenship to be approved by the councils without vigorous opposition was dated May of 1328. From this date until the early forties the oligarchs demonstrated a sustained reluctance to bestow this coveted prize. Cf. *P,* CCXVI, f. 149r.

Soon the councils' political responses became even more lackadaisical. (While legislation was the exclusive prerogative of the signory, the councils could and did wield a mighty veto over their proposals. This power could blunt the force of effective government, still further perpetuating laissez-faire rule.) Although occasions were rare enough, the slightest attempt of the signory to exercise its *auctoritas* might be resisted so when adjustment and change were essential and political leadership mandatory, the communal councils proved insurmountable obstacles or, at best, cumbersome and quarrelsome bodies. They displayed unmitigated enthusiasm only for stripping away any vestiges of centralized power that might impinge upon corporate interests. Almost never were they willing to strengthen the political machinery to allow the signory to make effective even the slightest demands for patrician sacrifice. Obstreperous, riddled with contradictions, generally forestalling the slightest thrust towards impersonal government, these medieval bodies were not the ideal political engines for weathering the crosscurrents of the treacherous mid-*trecento*.

Although the signory seldom tried to disturb the calm of the councils, proposals did come up in the course of work. Even the most innocuous of these might evoke dissent and produce concerted disaffection. Communal councilors were irritated by any attempt to modify the revenue system in the slightest particular. Tommaso Altoviti, an eminent jurist, spoke against conferring authority on the signory to select fiscal officers. Filippo Cionetto Bastari, who had a long civic career, voiced discontent with all manner of economic proposals, from the establishment of The Twelve Good Men, to the levying of a gabelle, to the imposition of a modest *prestanza*. Banco Puccio Bencivenni, a leading member of the *arti maggiori* elite, harangued the councils to rescind taxes on the *Lana, Calimala* elite, and *Seta*. Together with merchant Metto Biliotti, he then went on to advocate that no new imposts be created in their stead. This was hardly a suitable recipe for a commune at war. The leading judge, Messer Vanne Benini, had earlier voiced disapproval of the establishment of The Twelve Good Men and by the middle thirties contested any fiscal proposal, from a slight increase in the rate of a gabelle to the imposition of a small penalty for late payment of communal levies. Bentacorde Buonaccorsi's dissent was still more damaging to the formulation of public policy. Large blocks of state property (often confiscated and hence called "rebel's property") were sometimes leased to wealthy patricians for less than nominal rents. Whenever the *camera* was hard-pressed a proposal

was introduced by the signory requiring the holders to pay more substantial rentals. In 1336 just such a measure was presented, and the wool manufacturer Bentacorde promptly counseled its rejection. At the same session he spoke in favor of a costly alliance with Venice.[49]

The same profiles in ambiguity, if not in outright contradiction, described dozens of other Florentines. Yet another judge in time of crisis, Messer Bartolomeo Castro Florentino, favored strict limitations on the authority of revenue officials, proffering this advice: Let there be no new imposts. Yet he favored the hiring of additional mercenaries and the advancing of funds to Florence's Guelf allies. In 1337 this staunch and prolix advocate of strenuous if not downright imperialistic foreign policy that required enormous treasury outlays opposed raising rentals only a few florins per holding on rebel's property. A third judge, Rinieri del Forese, displayed the same symptoms of political schizophrenia: opposition to vital revenue measures coupled with warm support for wars and costly alliances, this time with Venice and the Lombard states.[50]

So enthusiastic were Florentine counselors for a reduction of taxes that a magnate from the house of Foraboschi even seconded a petition from the pawnbrokers—that vile breed of commercial pariahs, the republic's "manifest" usurers—requesting that the gabelle on their metier be scaled down. In a more serious moment and one replete with disheartening consequences for the commune, one of his kinsmen offered an amendment that postponed indefinitely the belated proposal for an *estimo* on city property and capital in 1341. The notary Ser Jacopo Gualberti was one of a large block of counselors to declaim against direct taxes on the countryside, thus depriving the beleaguered *camera* of substantial reve-

[49] On Metto Biliotti, see *LF,* XIII, Part 2, f. 19r; *P,* XXIII, f. 27r; *LF,* XV, f. 36; *P,* XXIV, fols. 27r. 63. For loans to the *camera* made by his firm along with those of the principal Florentine companies, such as the Acciaiuoli, Alberti, Antella, Bardi, Buonaccorsi, Peruzzi, Rondinelli, see B. Barbadoro, *op. cit.,* p. 560. Concerning Messer Vanne, see especially *LF,* XIII, Part 2, f. 23. Like so many others, he had spoken in favor of conferring power on Charles of Calabria and later supported the signory of Walter of Brienne. Cf. *Ibid.,* XIII, f. 1 (June 26, 1326); *DP,* III, f. 19 (Aug. 19, 1343). For Bentacorde Buonaccorsi, see *CapP,* XII, f. 118. He, too, had been a supporter of Calabria and soon served Brienne. Cf. *LF,* XIII, Part 1, f. 22. His brother occupied the key post of collector of *prestanze* under Brienne. Cf. *Ibid.,* XIII, f. 22; *CCE,* I bis, fols. 136r–142. Moreover, Bentacorde himself, in addition to being one of the primary fiscal supporters of the oligarchical regime, had also acted as one of its founders when he introduced the new imborsation laws of November, 1328, into the communal councils. Cf. *P,* XXV, f. 25, and B. Barbadoro, *op. cit.,* p. 560.

[50] On the legislative activities of the influential judge Messer Bartolomeo, see *CapP,* XII, f. 185; *P,* XXIV, f. 27; *LF,* XIII, Part 2, f. 65; XVII, f. 45r. See XIII, Part 2, f. 87r; XV, f. 3; *CapP,* XII, fols. 146, 234; *LF,* XVI, Part 1, 172r; Part 2, f. 61.

nues. Yet this notary favored borrowing money for the hire of troops and advised that holders of long-term loans be paid 15 per cent interest.[51]

There was a substantial element that may have had a greater impact on public policy than the foregoing: speakers who opposed any and all measures designed to strengthen the judicial and administrative machinery of state. No matter how inconsequential the effort of the signory to breathe life into the debilitated public law, disaffection was bound to follow. This sustained critique further encouraged the already strong penchant for compromise, thus making a regime always anxious for consensus even more pliant. The spectrum of opposition ran from such minor matters as granting added authority to communal prison officials, to major concerns such as vetoing efforts to revise the communal law or codify statutes.

No single proposal was more likely to provoke intense antagonism than a bill drawn up by the signory bestowing broader powers upon one of the judges of the republic. Councilors would remonstrate even though the bill was framed only to grant limited authority for a short term. The city might be ravaged by famine, yet speakers would deny authority to a magistrate to punish violators of communal grain statutes. Florentines were most outraged at attempts to widen court jurisdiction over obstruction of streets, highways, and bridges. Especially despised were such officials as the Captain of the Custody of the City, who had wide criminal jurisdiction over violations from the carrying of deadly weapons to high crimes such as treason. Communal councilors as prominent as the bankers Tuccio Guicciardini and Ricciardo di Salvestro Ricci voiced contempt for the Captain. Jacopo Ridolfi, guild patrician, and Jacopo di Messer Pino Rossi, magnate, were especially incensed at the harsh justice meted out to the city's magnates. Giovanni Villani's writings against him reveal the not incompatible ingredients of suspicion and misunderstanding.[52]

Perhaps the political career of Nardo Ruccellai, scion of a family of international traders matriculated in both the *Lana* and *Cambio,* best epitomizes the resentments of communal councilors. He served in a variety of responsible diplomatic posts and spoke in the councils on a plethora of topics from the feasibility of a papal alliance to the ratification of statutes for a subject city. Generally he was in agreement with the signory's poli-

[51] For expressions of opinions by the Foraboschi, see *LF,* XIII, Part 2, f. 21; XIX, fols. 118r, 121r, 177, 181r. For the notary, Ser Jacopo, see *ibid.,* XVI, f. 79; *CapP,* XII, f. 41.
[52] For opinions voiced by these influential councilors, see especially *LF,* XXI, f. 71r; XVI, Part 2, fols. 14, 60, 69; G. Villani, XI, 39.

cies; on three occasions, however, he entered vigorous disclaimers. Not irrelevantly, the three instances of dissent have the same focus. In September of 1331 he protested the enactment of ordinances to increase the authority of the judges over communal gabelles. In January of 1334 he urged the councils not to ratify conferral of power upon another public magistrate. In July of that year he opposed a petition presented by the heirs of a magistrate who had held the much-despised post of *bargello*—an office charged with maintaining law and order in the *contado*.[53]

## V

At this point it might be useful to pose a question that like so many others is easier to raise than to satisfy: What contrasts, if any, can be drawn between the personnel of the priorate with its advisory colleges, the signory, and the membership of the communal councils? Although we know the names of all who sat in the signory between 1328 and 1342, complete lists of the personnel of the communal councils have not survived. Yet we can piece together a representative sample.[54]

The problem is thorny since the priors and councilors were selected from the same order of society—the guild masters. However, the political experience of the former differed somewhat from the latter. The priors were on the whole a more finished product (for weal or woe). They had gone through an extensive *cursus honorum,* which began with an introduction into petty neighborhood posts and guild positions and culminated, after many years in the ranks of communal offices, with a triumphal entry into the priorate. Slowly, sometimes dishearteningly, they found themselves representing their parish in a communal law court or serving as assessor in their guild. Next, they might be appointed to one of the republic's many administrative boards—the Six, who supervised over the communal grain supply, the office of the mint, the prison commission, or committees in charge of road and bridge maintenance, night watch, and

[53] For the activities of this scion of this aristocratic clan, see *LF,* XVI, Part 1, f. 97; *CapP,* XII, f. 104r; *LF,* XV, f. 36; XVI, Part 1, fols. 17r, 56r, 85; XVII, f. 124r; XIX, f. 55r; XXI, f. 46.

[54] A study of the appropriate volumes of the *Libri Fabarum* as well as of the *Provvisioni* and the notaries yields perhaps as much as half the key personnel. The risks of generalization are somewhat minimized since the same individuals continued to hold seats in the communal councils over this fourteen-year interval. So many councilors were required—550 at a time—that the commune could not be too strict in the enforcement of prohibitions barring individuals from succeeding themselves in office. Furthermore, it was most difficult to enforce rigid requirements preventing numerous members of the same clan from serving in office simultaneously.

fire prevention ordinances. After a long apprenticeship at this pedestrian level, they might be catapulted into more prestigious and sensitive posts.

At this point the careers of prior and councilor tend to diverge. The would-be prior almost always went on to fill the key posts of diplomat, magistrate in the Florentine domains, emissary to Naples or Avignon, officer for the hire of troops, *podestà* or *capitano* in some foreign principality. He might be summoned to offer his life and honor as surety for the republic by going into voluntary exile as a political hostage. More usually, he was asked to serve on many of the important fiscal *balie*. Only those who finally achieved the highest civic prominence and wide experience would be co-opted by the incumbent prior to enter the signory. The arduous and sometimes tedious climb involved some personal sacrifice and much private gain. Hopefully the end product of this tortuous journey through the civic labyrinth was a sage and experienced public man—one of eight priors of the republic.

On the other hand, at least 650 Florentine citizens were needed to staff the communal councils, for elections were held three times annually and there was a minimum of 550 posts. Less than one-tenth of that number were required annually for the signory. The implication was clear: almost every politically eligible Florentine male would have to be pressed into service once during each two-year interval to sit in the communal councils. Further, there was a *divieto,* a prohibition against serving successive terms, and therefore as many as 4,000 Florentines were required to staff these communal assemblies over a two-year period. Thus men with little political experience were called upon. A seat in the councils was hardly a coveted prize, since it conferred little *auctoritas* and less status on the holder, and treasury records contain an abundance of names of those who preferred paying a fine to wasting precious time listening to the droning of the councils of the republic. On the other hand, diarists, keepers of family memorials, and chroniclers attest to the inordinate prestige of signory posts. Election to the priorate bore witness to the ability of an individual to complete an arduous *cursus honorum* under watchful and generally unsympathetic eyes. The successful candidate had a somewhat profounder awareness of the intricate problems besetting the Florentine republic.

Of the two councils of the republic, the more intractable was the Council of the Commune in which the magnates held extensive representation. Admired for their chivalric style and feared for their willfulness, they commanded attention in the Council. They dissented against

more pending laws and proffered more petitions than any other order. Their opposition was that of men of status against the rule of communal law. Steeped in a conservatism as hostile to social change as it was unresponsive to fiscal exigency, magnates tended therefore to be obdurate on a variety of issues. It is in the Council of the Commune that we find magnate Foraboschi objecting to the imposition of an *estimo* on the countryside; this council will repudiate the *estimo* time and time again. The hearth tax will be rejected, magnates Della Tosa and Rossi will urge the rejection of petitions for citizenship, and dissent will be loud against a provision establishing penalties for those who assault Florentine magistrates.[55]

If there were a model for apoliticality and patrician anarchism, it would be the Council of the Commune. The most extreme exemplars of its high egotism and refusal to face stern economic demands were the magnates least experienced in public life, who often belonged to families with little voice in the government for over a generation. Clans such as the Bardi, Nerli, and Frescobaldi, on the other hand, who were the very center of communal life, never expressed dissent in the halls of the council. They were vigorous supporters of the signory and lent money, energy, and talent to the many *balie*. Their support never flagged as long as the policies of the signory appeared likely to succeed. Their final disaffection was occasioned by the general collapse of public policy. The rebellion of the Bardi, Frescobaldi, Nerli, and others in November of 1340 was an effort to reorient foreign affairs by extricating the republic from its burdensome system of alliances as well as to forestall economic catastrophe and salvage something of their banking fortunes. Again a distinction must be drawn between resentment of communal authority per se and opposition as an attempt to employ authority for rational ends.[56]

[55] For persistent opposition to the imposition of an *estimo* on the *contado* by the men of this council, see *LF,* XIV, fols. 41, 45–46. As might be anticipated, disaffection was also evident with efforts to raise the rate of this impost. Cf. *Cap. P,* XII, f. 220r; *LF,* XVI, Part 1, f. 14. For expressions of discontent by Giovanni Pino Rossi and other magnates against provisions designed to punish those who injure magistrates or to confer greater juridical power upon the signory itself, see *ibid.,* f. 79; *ibid.,* Part 2, f. 58r; XX, f. 25r. For other instances of displeasure against efforts to make the law more stringent, see *ibid.,* XVI, Part 2, f. 47; XVII, f. 51r; XVI, Part 2, f. 82r. Even after 1343, when the percentage of magnate representation in this council was substantially reduced, it remained more intractable on the subject of conferring citizenship, strengthening the authority of the magistrates, and increasing the scope of the signory's jurisdiction. Cf. *Ibid.,* XXIII, fols. 10–10r; *DP,* IV, fols. 113–15; *LF,* XXXIV, f. 115; XXXV, f. 10; *P,* LIII, f. 72; *LF,* XXXVII, fols. 58, 156; XXXV, f. 10; *P,* LII, f. 1.

[56] G. Villani, XI, 50; C. Paoli, *Della Signoria di Gualtieri Duca d'Atene* (Florence: 1862), pp. 23–35; *Balie,* II, fols. 143–52.

One explanation of the difference in motivation is the fact that the more exalted the office, the likelier the occupant was to be a large-scale communal creditor. Indebtedness had been contracted by the government principally during the lifetime of the ruling oligarchy. The treasury of the commune owed the citizenry of Florence 800,000 florins or more; the debt had accumulated as a consequence of deficit financing whereby the oligarchs had imposed *prestanze* to underwrite the burgeoning costs of war, especially between 1336 and 1342.

If we were to enumerate the hierarchy of communal offices from prior to lowly post, we would find a striking correlation between prestigious position and magnitude of share in the communal debt. Fifty-five per cent of those sitting in the signory held shares worth approximately 1,000 florins each. Men who were repeatedly appointed to *balie* by the signory had even more ample holdings—better than 3,000. In contrast, those in the councils who were never elected to the signory or selected for a *balia* held average shares of 100 florins apiece. Thus the communal councilor whose patrimony was not invested in the life of the state and whose government credits were small could afford certain luxuries, not the least of which was hostility toward communal revenue measures. By the same token those who staffed the signory and *balie* were prone to support revenue measures, since any excess communal income returned to them at 15 per cent interest. Unfortunately, despite this stake in the well-being of the commonwealth, the priorate preferred a leadership role as ineffectual as it was belated.

# THE FAILURE OF OLIGARCHS, DESPOTS, AND MAGNATES: THE END OF THE CASUAL REGIMEN, 1340–1343

# IV

The two legislative councils, that of the People and that of the Commune, displayed the staunchest economic conservatism. Consistently they opposed the principle of direct taxation and the assessment of special levies on the corporate guilds, the *Parte Guelfa,* and the Tuscan church. They were even reluctant to authorize the election of magistrates charged with enforcing existing fiscal regulations and challenged the very notion of direct levies on the countryside. They voted down modest levies by the signory on rural real estate and capital. Only after the measure was reintroduced grossly modified and subject to repeated compromise could it hope to win the necessary two-thirds majority.[1]

The members of the communal councils appeared bent upon embracing a variety of contradictory fiscal policies. They insisted, for example, that the citizenry be reimbursed for its forced loans and then proceed to block the necessary provisions drawn up to that end. Councilors expressed anxiety if returns from indirect levies were not employed to reduce the

[1] Rates of rural imposts had been much reduced since the late *dugento.* In fact there had been a pervasive shift away from direct taxation. As we have seen, by 1315 the guild patriciate translated their political victory into a tributary triumph when they abolished the *estimo* on the city. Cf. R. Davidsohn, *Forschungen zur Geschichte,* III, n. 1270; B. Barbadoro, *op. cit.,* p. 529. Moreover, by the 1330's direct taxes on rural property had dropped by as much as 50 per cent from its peak in the late *dugento.* The justly famous statistics presented in Book XI, Chapter 92, of Giovanni Villani's chronicle indicate that the *estimo* on the *contado* accounted for only 10 per cent of all communal revenue. Only in the next year (1339) these imposts were cut almost 35 per cent in response to worsening economic conditions. In an age of vastly expanded communal budgets, the percentage decline of revenues from direct taxes in relationship to the total budget is even more striking. On the general theme of indirect taxes in Tuscany and the increased reliance upon the gabelle, see D. Herlihy, *Pisa in the Early Renaissance* (New Haven: 1958), pp. 69–88; E. Fiumi, "L'Imposta diretta nei comuni medioevali della Toscana," *Studi in onore di Armando Sapori* (Milan: 1957), I, 329–39; E. Cristiani, *Nobiltà e Popolo nel comune di Pisa* (Naples: 1962), pp. 185 ff.; G. Volpe, "Pisa, Firenze, Impero al principio del 1300 e gli inizi della signoria civile a Pisa," *Studi storici,* XI (1902), 177 ff.

communal indebtedness and at the same time sought to rescind these imposts. Speakers were magnanimous with advice—let the government live within its means by collecting all outstanding obligations—then the councils would vote legislation to garner the optimum of revenue from communal properties. But any effort to raise the rentals on these properties was certain to evoke a torrent of opposition. Councilors would object to concluding a peace with their vile neighbor Pisa but were equally loath to vote war taxes or even approve the hire of the necessary troops and captains.[2]

As long as Florence basked in radiant prosperity a consensus existed between signory and councils: the former would demand little and the latter give less. The regimen must be casual and involve an absolute minimum of citizen sacrifice. Judging from the treasury records, the rule of the oligarchs was so lackadaisical as to border on a kind of patriarchal permissiveness—almost an anarchy. Imposts on the *contado,* assessments on rural parishes, levies for castle guard and cart service, remained unpaid for a decade or more. Roads and bridges were in disrepair, syndics and rectors of corporate bodies failed to appear before revenue tribunals, and the activities of the judiciary were quixotic if not downright capricious. Heavy fines were imposed, only to have the sentence canceled upon payment of the merest pittance.[3] Indeed, few of the patriciate had reason to complain; nor was this happy condition to be duplicated over the next generations.[4]

[2] For opposition in the communal councils to the payment of the Captain of the Lombard League, see *LF,* XVII, f. 175 (Dec. 9, 1334). For expressions of disaffection for proposals designed to raise revenue for the hire of troops or even the election of revenue officials, see *ibid.,* XIX, f. 36 (Oct. 22, 1340); f. 88 (Oct. 23, 1340), f. 95 (Nov. 11, 1340); f. 116r (Jan. 10, 1341). For antithetical opinions on the subject of forced loans, see *ibid.,* XVI, Part I, fols. 33, 51–57. Throughout the decade of the thirties disconsolate citizens were petitioning for reimbursement on that series of *prestanze* imposed on merchants, guilds, and private individuals by Charles of Calabria. Cf. *Ibid.,* f. 33r; *P,* XXVI, f. 157.

Later in the century we observe persistent discontent among advisers to the signory with any imposts or *prestanze* except those which weighed heaviest on the poorer classes. If an unpopular tribute measure were proposed, the signory was instructed by its advisers to look towards the "union of the citizenry." Cf. *CP,* I, Part 1, fols. 22–23 (July 30, 1351); *ibid.,* f. 78 (Oct. 20, 1354). By the decade of the sixties these same advisers were verbalizing the stern doctrine that either the signory should make peace or look to the provision of revenue. This was no easy task, since the communal councils were reluctant to approve direct levies of any kind. Cf. *Ibid.,* IV, f. 94r; *ibid.,* V, f. 116r.

[3] For the lax, easy regimen of the *contado,* see especially *CA,* CCXXII, Parts 2 and 4. Dispensation was regularly granted for all matter of violation of communal statutes, from illegally occupying public properties, to harboring the most dangerous of outlaws. Cf. particularly *ibid.,* Part 2, f. 8; Part 3, fols. 29, 32r–42.

[4] Well might the Florentines have emulated Gladstone's budgetary speech hailing his countrymen on the "intoxicating augmentation of their wealth and power."

Signory and councils demonstrated a startling capacity to co-operate in heated pursuit of a do-nothing policy. Unfortunately, circumstances and events conspired to undermine the last pleasant and restful tenure the Florentine oligarchs were to enjoy for the balance of the century. There were portents of the disasters soon to follow. Business profits during the 1330's were not especially impressive; the two largest banking houses in Florence, the Bardi and Peruzzi, did not show substantial gains. In fact, the latter suffered a sizable decrease in capital. When Edward III of England defaulted on his debts to the houses of Bardi and Peruzzi, obligations of as much as 800,000 florins were repudiated.[5] Such a grand sum was equal to more than twice the commune's annual revenue from all taxes. Moreover, by the end of the thirties there was a desperate shortage of capital in the city.[6] Beginning in 1338 and until late 1346 a wave of bankruptcies inundated the great and the petty entrepreneurs. At almost each session of the communal councils, disgruntled creditors presented petitions for collection of their claims, and the signory was obligated to appoint syndics to manage the assets of the hard-pressed firms and to make settlement with the creditors. Soon some three hundred manufacturers, bankers, and businessmen were declared bankrupt. The once sanguine Giovanni Villani despaired; never in the annals of the commune, he morosely intoned, was there evidence of a disaster of such magnitude. He felt they could be understood only as a judgment of Divine Providence. Unhappily this tragedy was compounded by those most deadly and omnipresent medieval antagonists—plague and famine. Both were to strike in the fateful year 1340.[7]

Meanwhile the commune was confronted with a myriad of problems related to the protracted war over Lucca. If money was to be obtained for the hire of troops it would be necessary to boost the already inflated interest rates on short-term war loans. The dearth of capital likewise made *prestanze* more difficult to collect; further, the number of individuals or companies willing to advance money on the surety of future tax levies was alarmingly small. Communal income from indirect taxation had long been assigned for the payment of interest on outstanding government loans. By the end of 1338 all gabelles and other treasury income (*entrata*) had been pledged to the creditors of the republic for the next six years.

[5] A. Sapori, *La crisi delle compagnie*, pp. 105 ff.; R. Davidsohn, *Geschichte von Florenz*, IV, Part 2, p. 208.
[6] A. Sapori, *op. cit.*, p. 113, and *Studi di storia economica*, I, 109.
[7] He lamented, "No lord or tyrant or commune can have faith in *potenza umana*," so terrible were the evils besetting the polis. *Cronica*, XI, 77. Cf. also XI, 78, 95, 118.

The effect of such an ill-advised policy was only too apparent: the *camera* was stripped of all her staple sources of income.[8]

Even at the height of Florentine prosperity (1336–38) the total income of the *camera* had been barely sufficient to meet the ever-mounting budget. Earlier the armies of Florence had been drawn in part from her domains; campaigns of short duration were frequently waged within sight of her ramparts. In the late thirties mercenaries and alliance systems entailed exorbitant outlays, causing the public debt to increase over 100 per cent in less than a decade. Well in excess of the total annual revenue of the commune, it soon equaled two years' revenue and then three. Villani tells us that the basic outlay for troops averaged 140,000 florins for the years between 1336 and 1338. As a bitter afterthought he adds that this figure does not include the pay for the numerous mercenaries engaged to fight the disastrous campaigns in Lombardy.[9] Nor did it take into account the heavy expenditure for castle guard, weapon maintenance, the repair of fortifications, or those hardy budgetary perennials, subsidies to the Guelf allies, the Pope, and the Angevin King of Naples.

The medieval system of gabelles or indirect levies was totally inadequate to sustain both the commune's extensive treaty commitments and staggering military disbursements. Furthermore, income from these gabelles began to decline alarmingly in 1338–39. If we rely upon gabelle yields to construct a general picture of the Florentine economy, the year 1338 marks the terminus of a lengthy era of buoyant expansion. Yet the economy remained viable and after 1343–44 even demonstrated an astounding measure of resiliency.

Starting in 1338 and lasting well into the year 1343 the dearth of communal income from the gabelles became more severe. Revenue from the single most important source, the customs toll, had reached 90,200 florins by 1336–38; when it was put up for sale for the next biennium on December 30, 1337, it brought only 83,500 florins. Even more discouraging, the publicans who farmed it were compelled to default on their commitment to the treasury, acknowledging in their petition for relief from the unpaid balance that returns fell far short of that figure. For sale again in

[8] G. Villani, XI, 90; A Sapori, "La gabella delle porte di Firenze," *Miscellanea in onore di Roberto Cessi* (Rome: 1958), I, 321–48; E. Fiumi, "Fioritura e decadenza dell'economia fiorentina," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* 354–55.

[9] Income from the gabelles on wine and salt, as well as the customs toll and the *estimo* were pledged for the hire of troops. Cf. G. Villani, XI, 91–92. Cf. also G. Villani, XI, 50; Stefani, rub. 520. These outlays were but modest portents of things to come. By 1341 the *camera* was spending 30,000 florins a month for the conduct of the war against Pisa. Cf. G. Villani, XII, 130; A. Sapori, *La crisi,* p. 114.

1339, it yielded even less—only 76,000 florins. So disappointed were the communal councils at this paltry sum that twice they voted against confirmation of the sale of this gabelle to the tax farmers. Only after the signory presented the measure a third time did the council finally approve. Meanwhile, buyers twice petitioned the councils for a reduction in the contracted price of the levy. By April of 1339, despite these reductions, the buyers were already well in arrears on their payments to the *camera*. As we shall see, this toll struck its nadir in 1342 and then began its ascent.[10]

The city's second most lucrative gabelle was the tax on the sale of wine, averaging 58,000 florins during the prosperous biennium 1336–38. It dropped only slightly in the following year, but by December of 1342 it had declined more than one-third in value. Petitions from vintners describe graphically the plight of this guild, reduced to pauperage because of the wars, famines, and pestilence that had prevented proper cultivation and transport of their product. Now they tearfully petitioned the signory for redress—or at least temporary remission from their economic plight.[11]

The returns from the gabelle on contracts, imposed on notarized documents from land transfers to contracts of business partnerships, display an even more dramatic fluctuation during these critical years. In the biennium 1336–38 the treasury had collected 20,000 florins annually but within four years was garnering only one-third of this amount. The impost on salt stood at 14,450 florins per year for 1336–38; by 1342 it reached only 4,679 florins. The buyers of the meat gabelle in the city were forced repeatedly to default on payments to the treasury, and finally the tax was drastically reduced by action of the signory. The levy on the slaughter of cattle in the countryside declined some 50 per cent over these years. It was becoming increasingly difficult for the signory to find buyers for the gabelles on flour mills, fulling mills, Arno fisheries, and oil presses. Comparable patterns of steep decline were also recorded by the many other communal gabelles; judging from the behavior of these crucial indicators of communal well-being, we can conclude that the years between 1338 and 1342 were indeed bleak ones for the Florentine *camera* as well as for the business community.[12]

[10] *CapP,* XII, f. 272r (Dec. 30, 1337); *LF,* XVIII, f. 89 (Jan. 19, 1339).

[11] *CapP,* XII, f. 282r (Feb. 3, 1338); *CCE,* VI, fols. 51, 53r; VIII, fols. 3r, 34; IX, f. 39r; X, f. 97; *Balie,* II, fols. 78 ff.

[12] For returns on the salt gabelle, see G. Villani, XI, 92; *CCE,* I bis; VI, f. 44. It is interesting to note that in 1334 tbis tax yielded the commune just under 13,000 florins; its peak, then, was in the biennium 1336–38. Cf. *P,* XXVI, f. 44r, for the 1334 figure. For returns on the gabelle on contracts, see G. Villani, XI, 92; *CCE,* I bis; *Capitoli,* XVIII, f.

The decline in public revenues is but one of many indices that help determine the locus of the darkest moments of communal depression. Chronic warfare had left its bloody mark on the countryside; soon marauding companies invaded and the carnage and horror intensified. The plaintive cry was raised by rural communes and parishes to scale down their tax liability. During the reign of Charles of Calabria (1325–28) this liability was reckoned at 250,000 lire. Less than a decade later it stood at 200,000 lire and in the fateful interval 1338–39 was reduced to 150,000 lire. Rustics alleged that small landholders were losing their farms to Florentine laymen and clergy bent upon enlarging their agrarian patrimony at the expense of the *contadini.* The situation for the men of the *contado,* lamented the syndics, had become intolerable; many peasants had abandoned their lands and emigrated to the city. If a decline of 40 per cent in the tax liability of the *contado* over a period of 12 years is indicative of the rural prosperity, the late thirties were a nadir in rural well-being. The multiplication of dolorous pleas by the *contadini* for relief and even charity is the bitterest commentary upon the ravages of warfare and the attendant dislocation of the poor.[13]

Because the signory found it extremely difficult to farm out Florentine taxes to citizen buyers, special governmental commissions were established to supervise their daily collection. So many purchasers of the gabelles had defaulted and so few were willing to venture fresh capital in what appeared with every passing day a riskier enterprise, that the signory was left with no alternative. The treasury could therefore no longer expect to enjoy the money advanced by the tax farmers in the fiscal year before the gabelles fell due.

The crisis deepened when minor guilds and minor guildsmen announced that they were unable either to honor their tax commitments to the *camera* or underwrite new *prestanze.* Instead, they tearfully exhorted the signory to be merciful and reduce their indebtedness. Syndics of towns in the Florentine domain railed against evil times, decried the scourge of war and the failure of crops, and pleaded for a prorogation of taxes. From tiny communities like Laterina to the large-walled town of Arezzo flowed a relentless stream of petitions for a redress of grievances; again it was the

28. For figures on the impost on cattle in the *contado,* see G. Villani, XI, 92; *Balie,* II, fols. 182–83. For instances of default and bankruptcy by purchasers of communal gabelles from 1338 through 1343 see *CCE,* I bis, fols. 157r–158r, 187r, 219, 316; *Balie,* II, fols. 25–26.

[13] G. Villani, XI, 92; *CapP,* XII, f. 211r; B. Barbadoro, *op. cit.,* p. 201. For added material on rural rates, see *LF,* XVII, f. 195 (Jan. 28, 1340).

damages wrought by war and the dislocation of the times which prompted them. Vintners announced to the signory that the sale of their precious commodity had fallen so low that the communal tax would have to be cut by one-third or one-half. Butchers and grocers made dire prophecies for the future if the signory did not intervene and see that communal imposts were drastically curtailed.[14]

By 1341 it had become apparent that unless the fiscal structure of the republic were altered radically, the commune would soon be confronted with bankruptcy. In fact by January of 1341 the government announced to the communal councils that revenues from indirect taxes were no longer adequate to finance military ventures. The treasury regularly suspended payment of interest on the mounting communal debt. By 1342 this debt had climbed to the alarming figure of 800,000 florins. With rates inching above 15 per cent, the outlay for interest payments alone would be a crippling 120,000.[15]

Although confronted with seemingly insoluble economic problems, the regime was unwilling to jettison her costly schemes for gaining that valuable prize—Lucca. Mastino della Scala, Lord of Verona and ruler of Lucca, had accepted a Florentine bid of 250,000 florins for title to the city, but nearby Pisa felt threatened. In order to possess the prize, the Florentines must war against Pisa. Moreover, Florentines were certain the roads to the north across the Apeninnes, so essential to their commerce, would be threatened should Lucca fall to Pisa. Equally disturbing, the ports of the west Italian littoral would be closed to Florentine shipping.

Once it had agreed to the stipulation of Mastino, the republic found its debt increased by another quarter of a million florins. Unhappily for the cherished ambitions of the city, the Pisans now allied with the powerful Visconti of Milan in a supreme effort to deprive Florence of Lucca. A new and even costlier conflict ensued. Florentine revenues, meanwhile, had been further depleted. The total for September–October of 1340 was

[14] For petitions of Laterina and Arezzo, see *Balie,* II, fols. 82, 175–176. On pleas of vintners and other *minori,* see *DP,* III, f. 9r; *Balie,* II, fols. 3–4. See also the request for government assistance by the men of the great *Calimala* guild in late January of 1342. They complained bitterly because protracted hostilities had made it impossible for them to import certain raw materials necessary for cloth finishing. Cf. *P,* XXXI, f. 64 (Jan. 31, 1342).

[15] It was becoming necessary to borrow at usurious rates, sometimes as high as 20 per cent. Cf. *Balie,* II, fols. 3–4 (Oct. 2, 1342). The problems of the treasury were further compounded since buyers for communal imposts (tax farmers) made offers that were "neither just nor suitable." The treasury, therefore, could not avail itself of the anticipated annual revenue, but was obligated to subsist on daily collections. Cf. *P,* XXXI, f. 31r (Nov. 20, 1341).

only 70,000 lire; one had to go back to the slack period of January–February, 1327, to discover a comparable low. Only one September–October interval in communal history had shown lower treasury receipts, that of 1317. The 70,000 lire were a full 60 per cent below the average registered for those two active months of early fall.[16]

The cash receipts of the treasury were soon reduced to a trifling sum, and in 1342 the commune was obligated to declare a moratorium on all public debts. The effect of this step was to freeze a substantial portion of the assets of the great banking houses that had invested so heavily in *prestanze*. To add to their woes, the King of France took severe reprisals against their branches in his territories. News of the calamities suffered by the private and public sectors of the economy was bruited abroad, and foreign depositors, both lay and ecclesiastical, demanded immediate restitution. Giovanni Villani's "two columns of Florentine prosperity," the Bardi and Peruzzi, tottered. Land, that great medium of exchange and storehouse of worth in the medieval economy, rapidly lost value. Always crucial to the Florentine entrepreneurial system, in which loans backed by real estate could be made at lower interest rates, the drop in land values served both to deflate the economy and boost interest rates. The Acciaiuoli, Antellesi, Bardi, Buonaccorsi, Castellani, Cocchi, Corsini, Peruzzi, Uzzano, and others were forced to sell extensive property in the city and *contado* at a severe loss.[17]

## I

Only in times of prosperity had the signory been able to steer a relaxed course between the Scylla of the council's intransigence and the Charybdis of minimal communal fiscal needs. Since the signory alone could propose legislation, the initiative, however limited, was theirs. As we have seen, its members were also the principal creditors of the commune. They were more experienced in political and economic matters than communal councilors and more selectively chosen for their posts; was it not fair to expect from them a greater awareness of communal problems? Unlike the communal councils, the signory could meet in closed session, directing discussion toward the framing of legislation alone rather than toward the plaudits of an audience.

Until the onset of crisis the rapport between council and signory was

[16] *Diplomatico,* Adespote (Dec. 8, 1340).

[17] A. Sapori, *La crisi delle compagnie,* pp. 128 ff.; G. Villani, XI, 88, 98. Perhaps the best indicator of deteriorating economic conditions is the sharp fall in the value of the florin. Cf. *P,* CCXVI, f. 163; *CCE,* I bis, f. 33r. It tumbled from an exchange rate of three lire,, eighteen soldi, to three lire, five soldi, ten denari.

marred only by occasional bickering. The former might refuse to authorize payment to an ambassador or reject a provision concerning the election of a *Podestà* or a Captain of the People. If the council opposed long-term appointments of officials for the hire of troops, for example, the signory, after much skirmishing and maneuvering, might cut its request for a tenure of six months down to a month or two. The councils might become obstreperous or irresponsible: in time of famine they were known to refuse to confirm requests for loans to make grain purchases or hire officials to dispense bread. Seldom would they willingly assent to bestow power on a communal magistrate for any reason. Regularly they expressed concern lest the signory use revenues earmarked for warfare for any other purpose; under no circumstances were they to be diverted to provide interest to communal creditors, and yet the terms of the *prestanze* had to be met.[18]

In essentials, however, there was accord between signory and councils, with the former trying to operate within the not too spacious framework of the existing revenue system. When additional monies had to be found, a tax on bread or grain, which weighed heaviest on the city's poor, was enacted with full approval of the councils. If this proved inadequate the rate of the salt levy might be augmented or the fees of the pawnbrokers' cartel for plying their "reprehensible trade" might be collected biannually instead of annually. When the *camera* was especially hard-pressed, a forced loan might be exacted from the *scioperati*. If a *prestanza* was decreed, the signory would specify the communal gabelles to be pledged for its restitution. Further, the signory would permit the communal councils to serve as courts of law where criminal charges against certain high-born Florentines might be dismissed by their vote. The signory made only the most modest efforts to enforce the rule of law, limiting itself to an occasional provision overwhelmingly approved by the councils, treating such questions as the right to bear arms or the size and shape of particular weapons.[19]

[18] *LF,* XVI, Part 1, fols. 34, 98. Further, there were strenuous objections to the payment of excessive interest upon what were in fact short-term war loans. *Ibid.,* XVII, f. 14r. Dissatisfaction was intensified since the *camera* was unable to make interest payments on *prestanze* imposed as far back as 1326 for the war against Castruccio. *P,* XXVI, f. 157.

[19] The signory continued to display its habitual preferences for those durable elements of the gentle paideia—government by exhortation and admonition. *Ibid.,* XXV, f. 90r; *LF,* XVI, Part 2, f. 67r; XIV, f. 41. For additional instances of grants of judicial dispensation during this period, see *GA,* CCXXII, Part 3, fols. 5r, 50, 56. A Donati, one of the leading magnates, was fined 2,000 lire for assaulting a *popolano;* he paid 10 lire for dispensation from the verdict. A noble from the house of Pazzi paid 125 lire for dispensation from an identical charge. *Ibid.,* f. 18. A *popolano* condemned for assault against a Rossi magnate had his plea for dispensation rejected.

In 1338 the harmony between these two bodies gave way to the cacophony of a new era. The signory had displayed talent for little beyond an *ad hoc* concept of government. When crisis ensued, the communal councils again demonstrated an alarming but predictable inability to respond to the new and unaccustomed leadership provided by the signory. They continued to vote down the approval of magistrates, delay furnishing stipends for ambassadors, opt for shorter terms for key officials of the republic, and piously exhort the *camera* to live within its means at a time when the treasury balance was pitiful. When the signory proposed that a foreign judge be hired to put some semblance of order into the present disarray of public holdings and properties, the Council of the Commune pre-emptorily vetoed the measure. Even more vexing was the Council's tactic of voting down the appointment of special officials to collect communal imposts on the countryside. Measures to garner revenue from the subject domains were similarly weakened.[20]

By June of 1340 the gap between signory and councils was well on the way to assuming the monumental and discouraging proportions of an abyss. Over the next months the councils acted to reject virtually every crucial revenue measure proposed by the signory. On June 8 a *prestanza* was vetoed in the Council of the Commune; the next month the same *prestanza* much reduced was again proffered and this time managed to garner sufficient votes for passage. Soon after, the councils, with their customary intransigence, hindered the enactment of measures to collect added revenue from communal property. September saw them refusing to authorize payment for the troops of the republic. In the following month two crucial proposals were offered. One concerned the establishment of a special commission for directing communal finances, and the other dealt with the extension of the prerogatives of the Captain of War. The first finally passed the Council of the Commune, much modified, after being rejected several times. The second was enacted only after the signory reassured the Council that the Captain was to have no more horses, troops, salary, or power than his predecessor.[21]

[20] Perhaps a document of Mar. 7, 1330, epitomizes both the sentiments of communal councilors and those charged with maneuvering proposals through these irritable communal legislative bodies. The signory called upon the councils to approve the appointment of "fourteen good men" authorized to raise revenue. The enabling act containing this proposal stated that these *boni viri* were to raise revenue "cum minori incommodo" to the citizens. Cf. *LF,* XIV, f. 54r. For other instances disclosing disaffection in the councils as well as attempts to placate, see *CapP,* XII, fols. 173, 218; *LF,* XIV, fols. 42, 51–54r, 106r; XV, f. 79; XVI, Part 1, fols. 27–33, 51–57; Part 2, fols. 61, 82r.

[21] *Ibid.,* XIX, fols. 29, 43, 63, 88, 113–113r; XVII, f. 47r. Among those to speak against the signory's proposals at this time were the very influential *popolani grassi,* Angelo Alberti and Niccolo Guicciardini.

The last part of the year was spent in an effort to extricate the *camera* from its financial bind. In December the signory initiated the intricate procedures that culminated in a bill authorizing the *estimo*. A provision requesting approval for this levy on city land and capital was presented to the Council of the People on January 30, 1341, and managed to eke through. The following day witnessed its defeat at the hands of the Council of the Commune. Again on January 12 this crucial piece of legislation was introduced, and again the Council of the Commune saw fit to vote it down. Finally, on January 13, 1341, it was approved, but only after it had been completely emasculated in the signory. The amended version contained the following statement: "Cum hac detractione, nulla exactio fieri possit vel debeat ad ipsum extimum nisi etiam reformatus fuit per consilium comunis Florentie." ("With this detraction, no tax can be or should be made on the basis of this *estimo* unless it has also been reformed by the Council of the Commune.") [22]

Thus could the Council of the Commune, with its extensive magnate representation, determine whether or not there was to be a levy on urban real estate and capital. Never over these years did the signory seek to win the Council's approval for the *estimo*. Perhaps there was a tinge of vindictiveness in the signory's announcement that creditors could hardly expect to receive interest because income from indirect taxes had to be committed to the conduct of the war. The *camera* reverted to the dubious practice of exacting forced loans, knowing full well that restitution must be banished to the realm of some fiscal Utopia.[23] Capital was short and therefore prorogations and reductions of individual *prestanze* were chronic. The *camera* attempted to float voluntary loans, asserting that income from unpledged gabelles would be used for amortization and payment of interest. Indeed, what unpledged gabelles? communal creditors may well have asked. Surely such fiscal rhetoric could have deceived no one.

## II

The intractability of the councils and the failure of the signory to provide leadership had culminated in an impasse. Such a stalemate was intolerable, for Florence was confronted with a Pisa revived by support

[22] *Ibid.*, XVIII, fols. 74–76r; XIX, fols. 118–121r, 192r.
[23] Restitution on *prestanze* was suspended, and yet collection and even imposition of additional forced loans continued. *Ibid.*, XXI, fols. 46r, 52.

from a new ally, the Visconti of Milan. From March of 1341 until September of 1343 communal politics was toward ever-greater centralization of authority. The relaxed regimen of the oligarchy was undone by the crisis. The communal councils had failed to respond to the belated efforts of the signory, choosing to stand as mute guardians of a long tradition of ineffectual government. The signory tried to rule alone and then resorted to the time-honored remedy of despotism.

The signory made free use of the *balia* to deal with the councils. If an extraordinary commission with sweeping fiscal powers were appointed by the signory, there would be less need to have recourse to the councils. In March of 1341 just such a *balia* was proposed. The councils vetoed it on March 21st, 22nd, twice on the 24th, and on the 26th, 27th, and 28th—despite repeated exhortations for its enactment by such patrician luminaries as the knight Salvestro di Baroncelli, partner in the Peruzzi company, and several others. After these failures, the signory was compelled to prorogue again the collection of *prestanze* and even cut the assessment to the individual citizen by a third. Large blocks of communal property were placed on the market, but the returns were not impressive. The signory was obliged to announce to her erstwhile Guelf allies, the papacy and the Angevin King of Naples, that she could no longer make any contribution to the anti-Ghibelline war chest.[24]

In early autumn both the resistance of the communal councils and the communal armies had been crushed. Florentine forces were humiliated by the Pisans, and although Florence still held title to Lucca, her position was untenable. In July of the following year she relinquished her elusive prize to Pisa. Two councils acceded to the signory's request for government by *balia*. This time it was agreed that the *balie* were to hold almost dictatorial powers.

Concentrated in the hands of the newest and most powerful of all Florentine *balie,* The Twenty, was the full *imperium* over the conduct of foreign policy as well as absolute control over the public fisc. The framers of the provision establishing The Twenty were well aware that an act concentrating inordinate *auctoritas* in any citizen body was a violation of the spirit if not the letter of communal law. Therefore it was expressly stated that the founding of this *balia* was valid, prior statutory prohibitions notwithstanding. Over the next years the council continued to function, but it limited itself to discussing the night watch or the maintenance of bridges and roads instead of vetoing communal tax

[24] *Missive,* V, fols. 94–98.

measures. Upon occasion they harassed rulers with demands that certain rectors be syndicated, but the initiative had passed from their hands.[25]

To understand the inability of the councils to respond to the demands imposed by history on the beleaguered polis of late 1339 to early 1340, one must recognize the compelling force of communal culture which produced this failure. Communal society was pluralistic, without a true center of political gravity, and the various social orders, corporate bodies, religious confraternities, pious foundations, the *Parte Guelfa,* and a host of other groups were bent upon retaining their ancient liberties and immunities. Thus the term, "obstructionist," implies a more intense and immediate response to that bedazzling array of ancient loyalties—caste, clan, guild, neighborhood—instead of to that most abstract sometimes imperceptible entity—the commune. Obstructionism can then be understood as a defense of these sacred medieval liberties largely responsible for giving identity to the individual and color and tone to society.

It is necessary to appreciate another, less-explored aspect of the Florentien psyche—its apprehensiveness in the face of any threat to the time-honored codes of behavior. Whenever the signory installed a series of special magistrates, they were criticized in both the council hall and in the pages of the communal chronicles. If one were to read only the chronicles or the minutes of council meetings, one would conclude that these magistrates were created by the signory to persecute a law-abiding and humble citizenry. Were they not a device whereby a self-seeking signory was able to perpetuate itself in power by rewarding its partisans and punishing its foes? Under the guise of ministering to the "good of the commonwealth" (*bene del comune*), such appointments always produced a "dolorous outcome" (*dolorosa uscita*). Let the future generations know, laments Villani, that from such magistrates is born only a "tirannica signoria." The word "tyranny" is employed here in its medieval sense: men can never be free when they are governed by "ufficiali arbitrari" who do "cose arbitrarie," for *libertà* is possible only under the rule of reason. Magistrates are tyrants because they act "senza ordine di ragione. . . ."[26]

If one consults the records of the Florentine tribunals a somewhat different perspective emerges. The activities of the magistrates appear neither elegantly evil nor spectacular, as Giovanni Villani ominously suggests. On the contrary, their behavior day in day out over their tenure is

[25] The last *prestanza* to be strenuously challenged was proffered by the signory to the communal councils in May of 1341. Cf. *LF,* XVIII, f. 55r. For the enabling act establishing the rule of the "Venti," see *P,* XXXI, fols. 7–9, 31; *LF,* XXI, f. 25r.
[26] G. Villani, XI, 74.

strikingly pedestrian. They apprehended dice players or imprisoned rowdies for performing dangerous athletic feats or playing violent games in the crowded, narrow streets of the city. They seized Florentines bearing long knives and concealing daggers and imposed cruel fines upon them. They tried to bring to justice citizens who had failed to pay the salt tax or the wine gabelle or who took advantage of their ancient right to attack bailiffs of the Florentine courts. Perhaps the principal concern of the "tyrannous magistrates" involved the maintenance of some semblance of law and order in the more remote territories of Tuscany. They might tyrannize over a magnate who had deprived a peasant woman of certain small land holdings or prevented a *contadino* from collecting his shares of the wheat harvest. Or they might prosecute nobles who harbored banished kinsmen or outlaw friends in the farther reaches of the *contado*. At the same time that Giovanni Villani marshaled evidence to discredit the magistrate, he was compelled to pay tribute to his effectiveness, for when a magistrate prosecuted a clan who had aided and abetted their exiled consorts, the many *popolani* and *grandi* engaging in this familiar practice became frightened and urged their consorts to flee Florentine territory.[27]

Well-born and affluent citizens betrayed a consuming suspicion if not relentless hatred for public officials who sought to enforce communal law. Nevertheless these citizens were passionate, almost religious, in their advocacy of the peaceful and well-ordered polis. Certainly the walls of the many town halls of Tuscany with their frescoes vividly portraying the glories of *buon governo* bespoke this communal paideia. In such a well-ordered universe no man would strive to rise above his neighbor; all would be "companions" and none covet the evil role of "signore" (lord). Only too dramatically would recent history furnish even the most politically unsophisticated onlooker with painful evidence of civic tragedy. Such tragedy had been unleashed by an overproud and ambitious magnate, or a politically adroit lower guildsman, or even by a high-minded but intolerant patrician. Civil war had been the consequence of Corso Donati's desire to play the grand "signore" and not the "companion."[28]

[27] For instances of the drab character of the law-enforcement efforts of such despicable and menacing magistrates, see *CCE,* I bis, fols. 154–58, 170r–82, 207r–13. Cf. also G. Villani, XI, 39.

[28] Especially objectionable to the chronicler Dino Compagni was the *superbia* of Corso. The crowd hailed him as he passed through the city streets shouting, "Long live the Baron!" The scandalized chronicler opined that "it seemed as if the city belonged to him." It is hardly surprising that the author was to cast his fascinating villain in the likeness of Catiline, although he was even "more pitiless than the Roman traitor." Cf. also D. Velluti, *op. cit.,* p. 33. The chronicler, Stefani, was to use the word "companion" to describe those who were willing to share public office with marked humility. *Cronica,* rub. 588.

The butcher Dino Pecora had played demagogue, and the consequences were blood feud, vendetta, and even civil war. But the most persuasive example was the sorrowful fate that befell the noble Giano della Bella and his ambitious popular signory. Villani etches the lesson into the sensitive, somewhat overwrought, political mind of his fellow citizens:

> And note that this is a great example to those citizens which are to come, to beware of desiring to be lords over their fellow citizens or too ambitious; but to be content with the common citizenship. For the very men which had aided him to rise, through envy betrayed him and plotted to abase him; and it has been seen and experienced truly in Florence in ancient and modern times, that whosoever has become leader of the people and of the masses has been cast down; forasmuch as the ungrateful people never give men their due reward. From this event arose great disturbance and change amongst the people and in the city of Florence. . . .[29]

The communal paideia was, then, deeply antipathetic to any manifestation of political individualism or, as a corollary, to the stringent enforcement of law.

In September of 1337, the law-abiding Villani criticized the magistracy of the Captain of the Custody and, by implication, of the signory for arraigning several magnates from the Della Tosa family on a charge of treason. He contended that the magnates were acting in the interests of the republic when they initiated diplomatic negotiations with Mastino della Scala, lord of Verona. This they may have done, but as private agents, since the court records contend that these negotiations were in fact disturbing the "societatum amicitiam et concordiam" between Florence and her new ally, Venice. We shall not be able to decide the matter of Della Tosa guilt or innocence, but certainly Villani was always ready to interpret the motives of the Florentine magistracy in the worst possible light.

An even more striking instance was his reaction to the new official, the Captain of the Guard and Conservator of Peace. When this officer sentenced a scion of the magnate Buondelmonti clan to be decapitated for serving a foreign power hostile to the Arno republic, the chronicler could not claim that the magnate was innocent. Instead he lectured upon the dangers of tyranny and concluded that Buondelmonti should not have been condemned since he committed no offense against any particular Florentine citizen. To this feeble defense was appended one of his favorite political aphorisms, intended as a warning to those who ruled the city:

[29] G. Villani, VIII, 8. For the justly renowned portrait of Dino Pecora, see Dino Compagni, I, 18.

Whoever offends one must threaten many. Shortly thereafter, in discussing a murder committed by a Tuscan feudatory, he produced a variety of technicalities and legal niceties to prove that the magistrates did not have jurisdiction. It is not the truth or falsity of Villani's claims but his hypersensitivity to any effort to enforce the law that strikes us. The actions of magistrates cause him to moralize about the dangers of spawning a tyrant; engaged in the most routine juridical procedure the magistrate threatens the *libertà* of the city.[30]

Chroniclers, literary men, and poets never tired of lauding the Scipio who went voluntarily into exile to spare his countrymen political embarrassment. Any citizen seeking to aggrandize himself threatens "la più cara cose che sia, libertà."[31] The polis will be enslaved if magistrates are encouraged to enforce the law. The chronicler and politician Dino Compagni was witness to just such an occurrence. He claims that the enemies of the patrician reformer Giano della Bella "stirred him up to do justice" against the lawyers and petty tradesmen engaging in monopolistic practices, thus turning public opinion against him as a reformer whose justice was no longer tempered with mercy and understanding. Giano's attempt

[30] Villani had condemned the first of these special magistrates, Iacopo Gabbrielli, of Gubbio, because he had seized a certain Rosso Gherarduccio Buondelmonti, who had been sentenced for serving the Tolomei of Siena and not for an offense perpetrated against a Florentine citizen. The charge against this magnate, however, was quite specific: in 1333 he and a band of armed men had invaded and occupied Florentine territories. Upon conviction, the communal councils had acted in favor of a petition upon his behalf. Cf. G. Villani, XI, 39; *LF,* XVI, Part 2, f. 4 (Dec. 12, 1334). What had occurred in November of the following year was that the despised magistrate had dared to enforce an old verdict of the Florentine courts against this scion of a noble house. For a record of proceedings against the Della Tosa, convicted of treasonous negotiations with the "tyrant" Mastino, see *GA,* CXXIII, f. 48 (Sept. 20, 1337). Donato Velluti in his *Cronica,* pp. 183–87, quite properly emphasizes the mundane character of the judicial role performed by these officials as they protect and administer the *contado.* Later documents stress the efforts of these men to collect back imposts, prosecute tax delinquents, and recover usurped communal properties. *CCE,* CLVII (1373). One of the striking characteristics of chroniclers of the first part of the *trecento* is the extreme view they took of communal magistrates. Never were the latter seen as members of a burgeoning communal bureaucracy but always cast in the role of hero or villain. By the late *trecento,* however, their actions were no longer the stuff of chronicles—yet their function was much the same. This change is symptomatic of a general acceptance by the individual citizen of the coercive power of the republic.

[31] Matteo Villani tells us that Niccolo Acciaiuoli was feared by his fellow citizens since he seemed to exercise an inordinate influence over the polis. Being a just and a wise man, he promised to exile himself from the city "like the good Scipio Africanus." *Cronica,* X, 23. Cf. also G. Boccaccio, *Le Lettere,* ed. F. Corazzini (Florence: 1877), p. 72. A leading humanist of this generation, Zanobi da Strada, composed a heroic poem about the illustrious figure of Scipio. Cf. P. Guidotti, "Un amico del Petrarca del Boccaccio, Zanobi da Strada," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* LXXXVIII (1930), 249–93. For a thorough analysis of the theme of "libertà," see N. Rubinstein, "Florence and the Despots," *op. cit.,* 21–28.

"to do justice" was considered the first step in a drive to found a tyranny.[32]

Thus it was the sacred duty of the "bonus civis" to decry the absence of justice in the polis while at the same time launching the severest strictures against any regime that created machinery to implement the law. Was not such a signory but a veiled tyranny? The politically enfranchised Florentine of this period was profoundly oligarchical stressing above all loyalty to the rule of a cohesive coterie. The threat to this coterie and to his beloved native city always came from those who attempted to leave the patrician ranks and offer leadership. Most dangerous were demagogues like Giano della Bella or Andrea Strozzi, who turned to the lower orders in an effort to effect reform.[33]

Opposition to enforcement of law by the law-abiding elements was but one of many paradoxes that contributed to the political obstructionism of the thirties and forties. Still another was citizen reluctance to vote taxes. Matteo Villani, continuator of his brother's chronicle and himself highly expert in matters of communal finance, having been in charge of administering the funded public debt (*Monte*) for over a decade tells us that affluent Florentines simply did not believe that the imposition of taxes on urban real estate and capital was justifiable no matter how pressing the treasury's need.[34] Later, debates before the signory by financial advisers to the government suggest that such imposts were believed to be confiscatory and any regime imposing them overtly tyrannous. Not only was the commune expected to finance its many activities, from the waging of war to the cleaning of streets, with returns from indirect taxation—clearly an impossibility from the 1320's on, as the scope of the public sector widened—but it had somehow to sustain patrician confidence in the

[32] Dino Compagni, I, 14. On the statesman's *superbia,* see G. Villani, 8: [Giano] was presumptuous and desired to avenge his wrongs; and this he did sometimes against the Abati, his neighbors, with the arm of the commune, and perhaps for the said sins, he was by his own laws, wrongfully and without guilt judged by the unjust." For a beguiling use of the word "superbia," see the provision directed against the haughtiest of Tuscan nobles, the Ubaldini. Cf. *P,* XII, f. 206 (April 30, 1306): "Ad reprimendam superbiam Ubaldinorum provisum est quod fiant due terre, una videlicet in Mucello, alia vero ultra alpes, et homines qui in dictis terris habitaverint sint franchi ab omni vinculo sevitutis et fidelitatis. . . ."

[33] Dino Compagni reveals that during Giano della Bella's tenure, communal magistrates condemned magnates, not out of respect for the imperatives of justice but because they feared the wrath of *il popolo minuto.* Another contemporary chronicler, Paolino Pieri, observes, a bit sententiously, that it would have been better had Giano been able to achieve his objectives "per senno e non con rumore." Quoted by N. Ottokar in *Il Comune di Firenze,* p. 274. Cf. Stefani, rub. 555, 590, 594, 801.

[34] *Cronica,* IV, 83; VIII, 71. Cf. also Antonio Pucci, "Centiloquio," Canto XCL, in *Delizie degli Eruditi Toscani,* ed. I. di San Luigi (Florence: 1785), VI, 185–86.

public credit. For it was the patriciate that would have to make the loans to render the treasury solvent. Never, then, was the signory to give offense to the patriciate—and this meant there could be no revision of the tax system. Later, Matteo praises a signory for its competence in raising money "senza gravezza e offesa de' cittadini." Actually, the government had lost courage and converted an *estimo* into a *prestanza*—a property tax into an interest-bearing loan. Moreover, it had initiated the practice of permitting wealthy individuals to pay the tax assessments for the poor and convert these payments into interest-bearing loans. This led to a lucrative and brisk traffic purchasing the *prestanze* of less affluent citizens Subsequent governments were to initiate still other tributary devices such as converting a tax into a loan if the assessment was paid in full.[35]

There was always a conviction among the affluent that direct levies were confiscatory. City lands as well as capital were considered immune from impost. They were somehow quintessential elements of the persona, bestowing identity and status on the individual and his family. Numerous passages might be cited from the writing of *trecento* diarists and keepers of family memorials, each replete with uninspired counsels on the importance of money. They felt money to be the best, the truest, perhaps the only friend a man can ever hope to have. It was more important than kin, and without it one would be certain of being despised. If, then, the penniless had little identity and less happiness in the world of the polis, was one not justified in evading all tax burdens? Did not communal imposts eat into the patrimony and threaten the clan with extinction? Indeed, one should move from a ward of the city in which his wealth was known, to another in which it is not, solely for the purpose of tax evasion. Impress your neighbors with the modesty of your income. Bring produce from your farms in the countryside to your home at night so that prying neighbors will not know the extent of your prosperity.

Yet these diarists, keepers of family memorials, and chroniclers whose dreary catalogues of burgher maxims revealed the extent to which gen-

[35] The earliest instance of this practice appears to have occurred in 1355. Moreover, it was vigorously argued by two *maggiori,* Simone Antella and Luigi Aldo Brandini, that the *camera* should act effectively to sustain interest rates so that the government might be able to borrow without difficulty. *CP,* II, fols. 62r–63 (Apr. 1, 1355). When the republic was much in need of additional income, advisers to the signory advocated a non-interest bearing loan rather than any direct impost. *CP,* XI, 134 (Jan. 11, 1370). Meanwhile intense opposition continued against levying taxes on the greater guilds or upon wool and other commodities necessary for manufacture. Cf. *CP,* I, Part 1, f. 22 (July 3, 1351); XI, f. 56r (Sept. 22, 1372). There were of course certain Florentines, especially lower guildsmen, who not only favored the reduction of interest rates to government creditors but even sponsored the reimposition of direct taxation on urban real estate. Cf. the remarks of the tanner, Salvestro Lapi, *ibid.,* I, Part 2, f. 118r, and N. Rodolico, *I Ciompi* (Florence: 1945), pp. 193 ff.

erous impulse was silted by dark prudential anxieties, displayed the most startling inconsistencies. They were the very citizens who ceded the government thousands of florins of public credits between 1345 and 1348 "in the name of love for the city and to its glory."[36]

Unwilling to vote taxes, they could still be generous. If their memorials, diaries, and letters were filled with advice to the self-seeking, the ambitious, and even the rapacious, still they did not lose their pride in and love for the polis. The same diarist who conceived ingenious stratagems for avoiding taxes willingly sacrificed much of his patrimony and more of his time in the public cause. Arts and letters desperately seek inspiring historical examples of great civic passions, such as those of a Cato, a Scipio, or any one of a hundred who peopled the Italo-Roman pantheon. These exemplars of inspired public unselfishness were contrasted with the paltry mercenary present. It is precisely this hunger for heroes that inspired Dante, Boccaccio, and Giovanni Villani.

Extreme emotions begot their counters, and for many citizens it would be possible to draw up a dialectical catalogue that reads thusly: One of the principal pleasures in life is revenge, for indeed nothing is more delicious. / There is no joy greater than that of forgiving one's enemy. Or: Friendship is natural to men. / Put not your trust in any man. Perhaps the most widely entertained sentiment of educated Florentines was the medieval Aristotle postulate that man is by nature a political animal. Yet few generations of educated men demonstrated a capacity to understand man's proclivity for antisocial behavior. Surely Dante is spokesman for just such a generation of men; so, too, were Boccaccio, the artist Orcagna, and a score of others.[37]

[36] *Monte,* S. Giovanni (1347), fols. 863, 912.

[37] For a telling example of this ambiguity, see M. Meiss, *op. cit.,* pp. 74 ff., where he discusses Orcagna's involvement with the actuality of suffering, death, and evil in his Santa Croce cycle. Prudently, the art historian observes that Orcagna also painted an idyllic scene of the "vita contemplativa," which banishes both the idea of evil and the fear of death. The great fresco in the Campo Santo at Pisa presents a combination of idyllic scenes and horrors. Too frequently in Boccaccio scholarship, as V. Branca has incisively commented in his *Boccaccio Medievale,* there has been a tendency to forget that the gruesome description of the plague and its attendant catalogue of human nastiness is modeled very closely on that of an early medieval depiction of a sixth-century Roman pestilence. Of course Dante's capacity to sustain the vision of man's penchant for political good as well as evil is too familiar to require exegesis. Perhaps something of this ability to sustain a moral pluralism can be inferred from the contradictory advice furnished by Paolo di Messer Pace da Certaldo in his *Il libro di buoni costumi,* ed. S. Morpurgo (Florence: 1921), Nos. 119, 276. "Mai non fare né fa'fare vendetta, però che le vendette disortano l'anima e'l chorpo e l'avere. Se se' ingiuriato, aiutati chola ragione, e vincierai ongni superbo." "Abi a mente che cinque sono l'alegreze del mondo principali, e chosi sono cinque i dolori principali e maggiori che l'uomo può avere in questo mondo vivende. La prima alegreza si è fare sua vendetta: il dolore si é esere efeso da uno suo nimicho."

## III

The purpose of establishing this thesis-antithesis relationship is to stress again that the Tuscan paideia permitted an effective solution to these contradictions: the doctrine of moderation. From Brunetto Latini, in the mid-thirteenth century, through Francesco da Barberino, in the mid-fourteenth, poets and literary men proclaimed moderation in all things: Talk not too much nor be overly silent; govern your manners according to the counsel of reason, always taking into account the circumstances and the audience to which you speak. In the *Convivio* Dante urges men to refrain from outbursts of hilarity but always to demonstrate moderate souls by laughing with a dignified severity, moving the features but slightly. Are we not the progeny of "nostri padri Romani"? asks Matteo Villani somewhat redundantly. The syllogism runs on: The Romans were "gravi," therefore we, too, must comport ourselves with "tranquillity of soul," shunning indiscreet counsel and "movimento furioso." Such extremes are worthy only of "gente barbara." Ever must we be mindful of "gli antichi moderati e virtudiosi," showing solemnity and caution in both speech and actions.[38] This wisdom was given its most compelling pictorial expression in Giotto's senatorial apostles.

Moderate norms were little suited to intervals of crisis. In the face of mounting disasters, Giovanni Villani did not moderate his political expectations but took refuge in the abstract formulas of the temperate communal paideia. The signory of 1340 should act as befits a "buono reggimento di commune": each order must be granted a share in the government—the nobility, the middling folk, and petty artisans and shopkeepers.[39] This abstract Aristotelian remedy was in no way compatible with the particulars of Giovanni's political opinions. By 1340 he had become suspicious of the nobles, skeptical of the political sagacity of the

[38] Cf. *Convivio,* III, 8; *Monarchia,* II, 5, and Dante's *Canzoniere,* XII. Matteo Villani, IV, 69; III, *Proem;* X, 3, 10, 42. On the theme of nobility and restraint in the religious art of the late Middle Ages, see A. Nicholson, *Cimabue: A Critical Study* (Princeton: 1932), pp. 28 ff. "Virtus" coincides with "mediocritas." Cf. E. Battisti, *Cimabue* (Milan: 1963), p. 28.

[39] *Cronica,* XI, 118. The meetings of the advisory councils to the signory, held over the second half of the fourteenth century, reveal the commonplaceness of Villani's opinions. Certainly Cicero's remarks on the desirability of a mixed government would carry substantial authority. There were, however, very practical considerations in the minds of such chroniclers as Matteo Villani and Stefani: Without giving some voice to the *mezzani* "li grossi pesci e bestie [great *popolani*] rompono le reti." Cf. Stefani, rub. 575, 685; M. Villani, III, 58; F. Sacchetti, *Novelle,* Nos. XL, CLXV.

middling folk, and contemptuous beyond measure of the petty artisans and shopkeepers whenever they were called to the signory. In fact, it is precisely these three orders he later blamed for gross political ineptitude. Had the government actually been democratized in 1340, Giovanni would probably have been its theoretical champion and its principal opponent and detractor, for at times his sense of justice gives way to moral outrage. Then he is vituperative toward the old patriciate and the *novi cives.* Upon occasion his political nihilism is relieved only by the Christian hope that aristocrat and parvenu will, in God's time, receive their terrible reward. The chronicle that sounded the magnificence and grandeur of Florence in the early *trecento* eventually assumed the quickened cadence of outrage.

Still Villani remained deeply interested in civic life; the only recipe he can provide the distraught citizen, however, is an abstract blend of temperate counsel and commonplace political sentiment. Even these are undermined by the onset of new tribulations; the juxtaposition is awesome—famine, death, change.[40] Villani fell victim to economic disaster, political upheaval, and finally the Black Death. As partner in a bankrupt firm, he was to be incarcerated in the *Stinche* (the so aptly named communal prison) and suffer ostracism in 1343. Moreover, his very faith in the legitimacy of the Florentine entrepreneurial ethic was shattered and so, too, was his confidence in human *potenze.* Nothing established by a "signore" or a "tiranno" or even a "comune" can endure. Indeed, expending civic energy is vain and useless; only God can bestow victory or defeat according to the presence or absence of sin.[41]

Although not all Florentines were prepared to embrace an embittered Christian piety even temporarily, the frantic, almost tortured character

[40] G. Villani, XI, 58, 77, 95. Many of the early tribulations of the Florentines, such as their succumbing to a despot, were seen by the chronicler as a "grande sentenzia" of God because of the denizens' cursed proclivity for factionalism. Cf. *Cronica,* X, 10. The failure to defeat Castruccio was attributed to civic discord; the Florentines had abandoned the guides of the senses and of reason. At this point, however, the maladies of society transcended the evils of factionalism and civic discord.

[41] Until the late 1330's the perennial villains of Villani's chronicle had been the magnates, who were seen as conspiring to undermine the herculean civic efforts of the men of the greater guilds. The magnates remained culpable in his eyes, but now the whole city was regarded as engaging in "mad undertakings" (*folle imprese*). No one in power was concerned with the common good, and for the first time in his lengthy narrative the chronicler consistently categorizes Florentine policies and programs as "folle." *Cronica,* XI, 130, 131. The disease of Florentine capitalists—the appetite for sudden gain—is insatiable and has its analogue in the body politic—the insatiable desire for conquest. Villani opines that even if Florence had defeated Pisa in 1341 and acquired much land, this lust would not have been appeased. *Cronica,* XI, 134.

of Florentine politics over the next years suggests that Villani's attitude was not an isolated one. Opposition in the communal councils had atrophied by mid-1341, the membership of these once-contentious, energetic bodies lapsed into political quietism. With surprising docility they had agreed to the formation of the *balia of* The Twenty. The councils failed to recover the initiative. Never for the balance of the century did they resume their role.

One element in Florentine civic culture that encouraged this lassitude was noted by the lawyer, politician, and diarist Donato Velluti, who in his domestic chronicle lauded the life that is conducted without giving offense to anyone.[42] This young Florentine, only lately returned from his studies in Bologna, had less reason to despair than Villani. His fortune was not threatened by the impending crisis, nor had he known the polis in better days. Despite modest lineage he won a high place in each of the regimes of the early forties, and his steady rise over the years was a masterpiece of contrived inoffensiveness. Treasuring "the ties of love, lineage, and neighborhood," never was he to permit his pragmatic equilibrium to be disturbed by ideals or indeed abstraction of any kind. Over the first part of his career he was confident that the burgher ethic could be united with knightly concepts of honor. Himself both cautious and moderate by temperament, he would have shunned the extremes of either code. The excessive courtesy of the noble would have attracted him as little as the bourgeois avarice. Better to leave the fulfillment of grand passions to God; let the *bonus civis* seek to be a "pleasing and practical man." In all things, then, the young lawyer showed himself to be a man of peace not easily disturbed. Proudly he renounced the vendetta and the blood feud, priding himself most upon those moments in his career when he employed his good offices to reconcile contending branches of the warring Medici family or restore rebellious patricians to the ample and forgiving bosom of the commonwealth.

Velluti describes in some detail his support of and co-operation with the *balia* of the early forties. In a sentimental aside he recollects how proud his father was to see him launched on the *cursus honorum.* When Walter of Brienne became lord of the city, young Velluti's career took a spectacular leap: he was among the first accorded the prestigious post of prior. After that he was awarded a critical post in the *camera;* in addition he was designated "avvocato," counselor, and ambassador for the ruler. But

[42] D. Velluti, *Cronica,* p. 33, for the use of the term "bello servitore." Passages are also cited from the chronicle of D. Compagni.

very soon, he tells us, his disenchantment was complete; when his friends and kinsmen came to him to request favors, he discovered himself to be without the necessary influence and therefore in a contemptible position before his compatriots. "Thence seeing that, and that I would be humiliated before my countrymen [*indisgrazia a cittadini*], sweetly [*dolcemente*] I commenced to loosen myself from [Brienne], in part and not altogether. . . ." No longer did Velluti ask boons from the despot; gradually he even ceased going to the lord's palace. Still, politics was a temperate game played by prudent men in a prickly milieu, and Velluti continued to be present when mass was chanted on feast days for Brienne.[43]

Velluti's reaction to crisis was to display concern for the style of politics rather than for its content. When his brother, Lamberto, returned to Florence from Palermo in October of 1342 after making his fortune, Velluti advised him to dismiss his servants and to dress in simple taste, even foregoing fancy trappings for his horses: it would not be suitable to be ostentatious in a country ruled by a "tirano" at a time when so many great guildsmen were suffering economic privation.[44] This was the extent of Velluti's expression of what was proper in those melancholy times. Velluti himself continued to serve the despot, loaned him money, took office in the aristocratic regime that ousted the tyrant, and subsequently continued his service under a popular signory. Later in the century Giovanni Morelli voiced the same apolitical sentiments in his book of advice to his children: Live "netto" (neatly); oppose neither in word nor deed those who rule the commune. The same tone is exhibited in virtually every other private and intimate book of political wisdom: "No matter what the provocation [the writer tells his progeny] you must remain at peace, and never arouse the enmity of anyone. You must be a man of the middle [*di mezzo*]."[45]

## IV

In July of 1341 opposition in the communal councils ceased and The Twenty commenced their rule. The response to the disasters in the countinghouse and on the battlefield had been to create a dictatorship of the creditor class. The Twenty and their confreres were in fact the very individuals who over the last years had moved in and out of the signory

[43] D. Velluti, *op. cit.*, p. 162.
[44] *Ibid.*, p. 144.
[45] G. Morelli, *Ricordi*, p. 196; M. Villani, VIII, 71.

with monotonous regularity. Now these creditors were accorded carte blanche to formulate and implement public policy. Hitherto they had either practiced the easy laissez-faire of the halcyon days of the early thirties or engaged in frustrating but rather mild contests with the obdurate communal councils. What distinguished them as a group from the so numerous lesser Florentine officeholders were the enormous public credits they owned. For the past two decades or so they had been the principal contributors to the numerous *prestanze* imposed. In a word, it had been the lavish contributions of these men that permitted Florence to underwrite her costly foreign burdens. Tax revenues had been inadequate to honor the far-flung commitments; the men of the signory—now The Twenty—personally assumed the fiscal burden. That they had done so at 15 per cent or better was a tribute to their business acumen; now they had an opportunity to demonstrate their political adroitness as well.

The personnel of The Twenty are worth a more detailed examination. Neri di Boccuccio de Manno Vettori was a partner in the international trading company of the Biliotti and himself a large-scale subscriber to government loans. Vannes Manetti Bandini was a partner in the banking house of Acciaiuoli and sat in The Twenty with Jacopo Donato Acciaiuoli. Messer Salvestro Baroncelli was an associate in the Peruzzi company and served on this *balia* with his principal, Pacino Tommaso Peruzzi. Although the most prominent of the Bardi were in exile at this time, this ubiquitous clan was well represented by Lorino di Buonaiuto Lorini and Taldo Valori, both partners in the great banking house. An Aldobrandini, an associate of the Buonaccorsi company, also held substantial government credits.[46]

A Rondinelli was an associate of the firm of Barone Capelli, a principal investor in the banking houses of the Acciaiuoli and Peruzzi. We can observe here a commonplace economic phenomenon: great companies loaned to each other, assigning outstanding government credits as collateral. There was, then, a twofold reason for maintaining solvency: first, it was essential if communal loans were to be amortized or interest payments made, and second, if the insolvency of the *camera* became chronic, security for business loans would be of little account.

[46] For the names of *I Venti*, see *P*, XXXI, fols. 7–9 (July 28, 1341). To these should be added Caroccio di Lapo Alberti, Barduccio Bardi, Messer Simone Peruzzi (honorific knight), and Maso Antella, each of whom held influential positions in the signory from the summer of 1341 to the winter of 1341–42. On the outstanding government credits of *I Venti*, see *Monte* (1347), S. Spirito, fols. 763–67r; S. Giovanni, fols. 93r, 427, 442–43, 840–44, 925; S. Croce, f. 817; S. Maria Novella, fols. 268 ff.

Of course the omnipresent banking house of the Strozzi held a post in The Twenty. This clan with its enormous holdings of government credits stands as a prime example of an entrepreneurial house that readily made capital available on the security of communal loans. Another large-scale holder of public credits was the Uzzano Trading Company, and they, too, were represented by one of the partners; so was the banking house of the Corsini. Finally, there were the very affluent Albizzi and Ricci. The one surprising exception was Giovanni Conte de' Medici: by no standards could he or his family be judged prominent government creditors. Possibly he was included in The Twenty because his kinsmen were popular with the middling and lower citizenry. The *balia* would thus have greater claim to the loyalty, if not the affection, of the overwhelming majority of disfranchised denizens of the polis.

The regime of The Twenty staked its future on a single battle with the Pisans, and when the Florentine armies were routed in October of 1341 the government commenced to pursue contradictory and in the end self-defeating policies. It was alternately to threaten and cajole its ancient Guelf allies—the papacy and the King of Naples—until it had incurred the suspicion of the former and the enmity of the latter. It even entered into negotiations with the dreaded chief of the Italian Ghibellines, Lewis the Bavarian. This maneuver succeeded only in terrifying friends and alienating potential allies. Such intrigue availed the republic nothing: early in January of 1342 the once-proud Twenty were compelled to admit that despite bold promises the commune was in a more desperate position than she had been less than a year ago. Florence did not have the economic resources or the diplomatic leverage to honor its commitments, foreign or domestic.[47]

The most likely escape from the dilemma appeared to be the selection of a titular lord for the city—"titular" in that it was hoped he would be the creature of those who had so maladroitly directed Florentine policy in 1341–42. His first responsibility would be to protect the failing companies from the precipitous claims of their anxious creditors. Secondly, he was to shore up the tottering public credit structure to enable the assets of companies that had invested so heavily in government loans to remain

[47] As early as the fall of 1340, Florence had advised her allies that she would be unable to fulfill her treaty commitments "because of grave and intolerable expenses." *Missive,* V, fols. 2–5 (Oct. 14, 1340). At the same time, the communal councils took the untoward step of refusing to pay expenses for an embassy to Avignon. Cf. *LF,* XIX, f. 82. So precarious was the condition of the public fisc that the usual annual bequests to the Franciscans and Benedictines of the city were not made. *Ibid.,* XX, f. 56r (May 24, 1341); XIX, f. 198 (June 6, 1341).

liquid. This would in turn require the drastic reduction of all military outlays, which in siphoning off all communal revenue from direct taxation served further to inflate the public debt. Only if peace were assured could communal income be used to pay the republic's creditors. Lastly, the new lord of the city was confronted with that hearty perennial—the problem of the revision of the tax structure.

Just a few months after The Twenty had assumed control new *prestanze* were decreed. Over the brief period October 1341, to June of 1342, these loans amounted to the very imposing figure of better than a quarter of a million florins. This dreary use of the antique financial nostrum suggests something of the intellectual and financial bankruptcy of the ruling elite. Early in 1342 the treasury proclaimed the consequences of this threadbare policy by announcing that restitution to holders of government credits were for the present suspended.[48] Therefore it was very much in the interest of the creditor class to support a revision of the tax system. Still, neither The Twenty nor any other body of citizens—the major guilds could have initiated legislation through petition—was willing to assume the onus of sponsoring such unpopular legislation. Since any such revision was considered a potential political albatross, a foreign lord could prove a most practical remedy; if he undertook the reform of the state in the interests of the creditor class, responsibility and even blame for citizen inconvenience and sacrifice must perforce be his. Hopefully, the despot would accept the sober advice and perhaps even discriminating guidance of The Twenty and their cohorts.

We have already noted that Walter of Brienne had served the Florentines with distinction some sixteen years before. In May of 1326 he had been received with great honor by the citizenry when he rode into the city escorted by a dazzling company of 400 knights, to act as vicar for the then-despot, Charles, Duke of Calabria. During his short tenure the French nobleman comported himself exceedingly well, even winning the acclaim of that arch critic of despots, Giovanni Villani. Grudgingly, the chronicler acknowledged that Brienne "knew how to exercise authority

[48] In January of that year the signory virtually proclaimed that the prized city of Lucca was indefensible when it acted to cede the town to King Robert of Naples. *Ibid.*, XXI, f. 46 (Jan. 10, 1342). Cf. also *ibid.*, XIX, f. 116r, recording that on the same date it was announced that all revenues from certain taxes and forced loans must be devoted exclusively for the hire of troops. Shortly thereafter the buyers of the commune's single most important gabelle—the customs toll—announced that they would be unable to make payment into the *camera*. *P*, XXXI, fols. 89–95 (Apr. 8, 1342); *ibid.*, CCXVI, f. 182; *LF*, XXI, f. 46r; *P*, XXXI, f. 82r.

wisely and was a wise lord of pleasing mien."[49] There were bags containing the names of candidates eligible for the priorate; among his first acts Brienne voided all imborsations and decreed new elections for June of 1326. According to Villani, he put in priors "at his own pleasure." If indeed he did act at his own pleasure, his principal adviser was one of the Acciaiuoli. Moreover, while serving as vicar Brienne took up official residence in the palace of the great banking family, the Mozzi. Furthermore, during his brief tenure the Del Bene, Peruzzi, and Strozzi spoke in favor of the Duke of Calabria's proposals for the beleaguered city and its hard-pressed patriciate. Surely neither Brienne nor his master were unmindful of the claims of the republic's first families.[50]

Early in the year 1342 the French nobleman was at Avignon paying his respects to the recently elected Pope. On March 15, among his last acts, the old Pope, Benedict XII, granted Brienne a letter of absolution in "articulo mortis." Late the following month the Pope, whom the Florentines had so disappointed, was dead, and on May 7 Clement VI ascended the chair of St. Peter. Villani narrates that at precisely that moment a group of Florentine merchants, established at Avignon, offered Brienne command of the dispirited Florentine army, and he accepted.

Of course the offer could only be made in the name of The Twenty, and they well knew Brienne's impeccable credentials. He had displayed extreme solicitude for the plight of the bankers and industrialists. Among his many other qualifications were his close ties with both the new and old Popes, his kinship with King Robert of Naples, and his high military standing as a marshal of the armies of the monarch of France. In a word, Brienne epitomized the ideals of the Guelf alliance system—ties with Naples, France, and the Holy See—and Florence was in dire need of preferential treatment by her old allies. Among the principal creditors of the hard-pressed Acciaiuoli, Bardi, Peruzzi *et al.* were the numerous prelates from Avignon and the barons of the Kingdom of Naples. Edward III's default on his enormous loans in 1339 made friendship with France all the more attractive since the two great northern nations had just gone to war.

Brienne arrived in Florence in the last days of May and was unable to thwart Pisan power. Within a month Lucca was irrevocably lost. The Twenty along with their many adherents now encouraged Brienne to

[49] *Cronica,* IX, 351.
[50] For the vicariate of Brienne, see *LF,* XIII, Part 1, fols. 4r–14.

assume ever greater authority. It was an Acciaiuoli who was to serve as prior under Brienne. Salvestro Baroncelli, partner in the Peruzzi company, spoke in the communal councils for the bestowal of dictatorial powers on the French nobleman. So did Salvestro Ricciardi Ricci, brother of Uguccione, member of The Twenty. A Strozzi was witness to the formal document creating the despotism. In the first months the Alberti served Brienne in key posts as well as advancing him needed funds. Another eminent family from The Twenty, the Bordoni, undertook numerous embassies for the Duke, as did several Acciaiuoli, who were counted among his most trusted diplomats. Perhaps the most delicate negotiations of the despot's reign involved drawing up a peace treaty with neighboring Pisa, for to admit defeat and to renounce all claims to Lucca could only rankle the Florentines. Yet such a treaty was crucial to the interests of the communal creditor class if they were to realize either income or principal from their loans. Only after hostilities had been terminated could the bulk of communal revenue be diverted from the payment of mercenaries. Two of the ambassadors to Pisa were men of the Peruzzi clan; their companion on the mission was a Bardi just recalled from political exile. Among the first acts of Brienne was the revocation of the ban imposed upon the Bardi by the signory after the ill-fated rebellion of November, 1340. Further, it was the Bardi who continued to serve as envoys and ambassadors to north Italian princes, the Holy See, and the Kingdom of Naples. Certainly, if any two families assumed responsibility for—and perhaps were the architects of—Brienne foreign policy, it was the Bardi and Peruzzi.[51]

The despot's powers were substantially enhanced when foreign policy matters and fiscal questions were consigned to the disposition of Brienne. Most important, it was acknowledged that the present tax structure with its system of farming out all indirect levies was plainly inadequate. It was further admitted that a reform of the administrative machinery of the Florentine *camera* would be essential. This would have to be accomplished before the back wages of the mercenaries could be paid or hostages reimbursed. Lastly, it was boldly admitted that interest rates on government

[51] For documents indicating the names of the many great magnates and *popolani* who spoke on behalf of Brienne, see *DP,* III, fols. 21r–22r; *LF,* XXII, *passim.* The names of the Peruzzi, Bardi, and others who held critical diplomatic posts under Brienne are listed in *CCE,* I bis, fols. 29, 34r, 84, 130r ff. Most interesting is the presence of the chronicler Donato Velluti among this august company; he undertook key diplomatic missions for Brienne. Cf. *Ibid.,* f. 137r. Others to fulfill the identical function were a Bordoni, Brunelleschi, Corsini. Cf. *Ibid.,* fols. 34r, 200, 206, 352r. For the pardon conferred upon the Bardi as well as their fellow magnates, the Frescobaldi, Nerli, and Rossi, see *Balie,* II, fols. 12–13 (Oct. 26, 1342).

loans had to be reduced; the figure proposed was indeed a modest one—7 per cent a year, approximately half the going rate.[52]

Immediately upon Brienne's arrival in the city a levy had been promulgated on all hearths in the Florentine territory. This hearth tax was calculated to yield the *camera* the not too ample sum of 2,000 lire a day and therefore did not entail substantial citizen sacrifice. Obviously this was a stopgap measure, for it was believed that Brienne would soon create the intricate machinery required for levying a new *estimo.* But to restore solvency to an almost bankrupt commune took time. In the fall of 1342 the balance in the treasury was so meager that the most modest daily outlays imposed a strain. It was at this time that the officers of the *camera* initiated the practice of making only token payments to mercenaries. A mercenary's salary was entered as a debit in the treasury records and the standard gabelle on wages deducted. Then he was required to loan—supposedly as interest—the *camera* part or even all of monies due him; finally, he would be paid the meager balance.[53] In the interim two *prestanze* were decreed, one for 80,000 florins and the other for 90,000 florins. Again this was a stopgap measure, since such *prestanze* could only enlarge the public debt and there was no communal revenue to be earmarked for amortization or the payment of interest.

Less than a month after Brienne had received the full imperium, the awesome task of treasury reform was completed. Hitherto entries had been made willy-nilly into the many ledgers of the several communal treasurers. Sometimes the only rationale discernible in this woolly method was the date of receipt by the treasury, with chronology alone furnishing the key to procedure. Now, in October of 1342 the treasury system was unified by combining the various treasuries to form a single *camera.* There were to be only two principal treasury officers for the commune instead of the numerous corps of former times; they were to secure the public monies in a chest placed under double lock. No disbursement was to be

[52] C. Paoli, *op. cit.,* p. 66. (The citation of the document by Paoli corresponds to its present designation in the *Archivio di Stato* of Florence. In many other instances, however, documents quoted or summarized by him are no longer classified under the citation provided in his study. Therefore, where such a discrepancy exists, I have chosen not to give the reference to his excellent study, but rather to the current source.)

[53] For the collection of the "prestantie noviter inposite in civitate Florentie" by Brienne's treasurer, Strozza Rossi Strozzi, see *CCE,* I, bis, f. 1r (Oct. 17, 1342). Returns from the collection of the hearth tax and a new *prestanze* of 80,000 florins were recorded in the treasury records by Barone Capelli. *CCE,* I bis, f. 4r (Oct. 18, 1342). Again it is worth noting that Donato Velluti was to serve as a judge in the ducal *camera.* Cf. *Ibid.,* f. 256 (Apr. 3, 1343). Early instances of forced *prestanze* by captains of mercenaries are recorded, in *ibid.,* fols. 7–7r (Oct. 22, 1342).

made by these two officers unless a notarized order of the signory was presented by the payee. Every two months these officials were to render a statement of their accounts to the syndic of the commune in the presence of the magistrates of the republic. Serving the treasurers was a staff of accountants, notaries, tax officers, and judges over the gabelles. By January, 1343, there was a compact army of such guardians of the public fisc.[54]

Less than a week after the initiation of the original treasury reform, it was stated in a ducal decree that in the city, country, and district of Florence there are at present many officials who exact money for our commune and expend it. . . ." The document then goes on to complain that such tortuous procedures can only generate "confusion"—and demands further reforms.[55] Especially critical was the condition of finances in subject cities and territories, because of multiple treasury systems and overlapping jurisdictions. Brienne and his advisers undertook comparable renovations of antique and sometimes dissolute practices in the territorial treasury system. The goal was clearly centralization and greater efficiency in communal finance.

## V

Because of the desperate condition of the public fisc, the thrust in time of crisis under earlier popular regimes as well as under Brienne was toward increasingly impersonal government. With the mounting demands of large-scale communal creditors for restitution or at least payment of token interest, pressures to strengthen the machinery of government also increased. In November of 1342 Brienne and his advisers began to reorganize the sensitive office of "Ufficiali di Torre." This was the key post charged with the administration and supervision of all "bona et iura communis Florenti[a]e." The operations of this body had been severely hampered by obstructionist communal councils during the lackadaisical thirties. Many communal perquisites (*bona et iura*) had been usurped by the affluent *potentes* of city and *contado,* who were reluctant to pay any but the most nominal of rents; soon the public holdings were indistinguishable from private wealth. To remedy this deplorable and costly confusion Brienne decreed that one record was to be kept and the officials over the tower to inscribe all "public rights and properties in the register."[56] In

[54] *Balie,* II, fols. 58–63 (Oct. 16, 1342).
[55] *Ibid.,* fols. 92–93 (Nov. 24, 1342). For the reorganization of the treasury system of Volterra, see *ibid.,* II, fols. 100–101 (Jan. 26, 1343). Comparable alterations were made for the city of Arezzo. *CCE,* I bis, f. 255r (Apr. 30, 1343).
[56] *Balie,* II, fols. 110–112 (Nov. 30, 1342).

this exacting work they were to be assisted by the ducal vicar and the communal judges. Any appeal from the decision of these men had to be made directly to the despot. In this way the judiciary was deputized "super reinveniendis et recuperandis iuribus communis Florenti[a]e ubicumque existentibus." Several appointments to such crucial posts were made by Brienne and his advisers from the ranks of the affluent *novi cives.* This class of course had fewer ties with the entrenched patriciate and had not been involved in the long-enduring confusion of private and public rights so profitable to the patriciate. They would therefore be more prone to enforce the law with vigor.[57]

Judges and tower officials proceeded almost at once to initiate actions against prominent Florentines holding public properties illegally. The most despised and conscientious of these judges was Simone da Norcia. Villani's contempt for him knew only the bounds of Tuscan invective. However, treasury documents cite him as "iudex super revidendis iuribus communis Florentie," or "iudex super revidendo rationes communis Florentie," or "iudex appellationum et nullitatum rationum, ac etiam sindicus communis Florentie," or simply "iudex rationum."[58] From the beginning of his tenure this Florentine judge condemned the great and the humble with monotonous regularity and unaccustomed fortitude. First, former government officials were constrained to restore supplies that had been misappropriated by army officers. Then Norcia compelled the paymaster of the troops to make restitution to the *camera* for embezzlement. Next he conducted a protracted inquiry into chronic thefts of communal weapons and armor, with an order that restitution immediately be made. Finally, he condemned numerous private citizens for peculation of communal funds and usurpations of public property. With surprising candor a decree of the Duke's stated that it appeared more reasonable to recover the rights and perquisites of the commune rather than to impose new imposts and *prestanze* on the hard-pressed citizenry. Norcia appeared to follow this decree scrupulously when he condemned the prominent patrician Rosso Ricciardi Ricci to the staggering fine of 3,932 florins for misappropriation of public funds and properties.

Here we observe something of the paradox of Brienne's lordship: installed by the patriciate to save the communal fisc and thereby ensure their

[57] For the names of *novi cives* who assisted Brienne in administering the commune, see *CCE,* I bis, fols. 20–364. Fines against the Adimari, Rossi, and other patrician houses are recorded in *ibid.,* fols. 249 ff. For an example of the initiation of a judicial process for the recovery of usurped communal property, see *Diplomatico,* Orsanmichele (May 19, 1343).

[58] C. Paoli, *op. cit.,* pp. 28–29; *CCE,* I bis, f. 27r (Nov. 23, 1342); *ibid.,* f. 191r; G. Villani, XII, 8.

personal fortunes, the dictator inaugurated a regimen that called for sacrifice on the part of that very patriciate. The Ricci had been ardent supporters of the Duke and were among the first to be entangled in the new impersonal machinery of state. Moreover, the Strozzi, Marco and Andrea, were held liable for part of this fine, for they had gone surety for Ricci. The Strozzi, too, had been among Brienne's principal adherents. The Dietsalvi, also prominent among Brienne's champions, were fined the very substantial sum of 1,000 florins for the heretofore pardonable offense of encroaching upon communal property. Still others to feel the cruel impact of ducal justice were magnates of the Adimari and Rossi clans. That the treasurer of the tower officials, Ser Arrigo Fey, was also a much maligned man is hardly surprising. Equally intelligible was the opinion of his contemporaries that this notary was more subtle in his ability to exact tribute than Aristotle in the field of philosophy. The records of the *camera* speak eloquently for the aptitude of this latter-day philosopher of the fisc, since for the first time regular payments were being made by the great patricians who held communal properties.[59]

Early in November of 1342 Brienne appointed non-Tuscan foreign notaries—thus, hopefully, more impartial—to serve as his representatives in distant Florentine territories and were instructed to exact all rents and other communal dues from the inhabitants of the far-flung hinterlands. The process of impersonalization and centralization was accelerated over the next months with comparable appointments in such distant territories as Arezzo, Castiglione, Scarperia, and Volterra. Nor were settlements around Florentine fortifications and outposts neglected; they, too, were introduced to techniques of efficient administration. Even lands only very recently acquired from the Bardi family were compelled to furnish their fair share of revenues.[60]

[59] The jurisdiction of Norcia and Ser Arrigo of course overlap, since both men served as "officials of the towers." *CCE,* I bis, f. 10r (Oct. 28, 1342), f. 73 (Nov. 6, 1342), f. 151 (Feb. 5, 1343), f. 276 (May 14, 1343). Perhaps a telling illustration of the paradoxical character of the French nobleman's lordship can be discerned in his treatment of the Bardi. On the one hand, as we have seen, he conferred a pardon upon those members of this clan who engineered the rebellion of November, 1340; on the other hand he meted out strict justice to one of their number for speaking disparagingly of the Duke's imposing *prestanze* upon the citizenry. For this he was fined the ample sum of 500 florins. Cf. *Ibid.,* f. 5r (Oct. 19, 1342). On Ser Arrigo, see G. Villani, XII, 8. Cesare Paoli (*op. cit.,* p. 25) gives the following contemporary opinion on this notary: "Più era quesso sottile ne le gabelle, che non fo Aristotele ne la filosofia."

[60] *CCE,* I bis, fols. 20r–31r (Nov. 8, 1342–Dec. 2, 1342). It was during this interval that a special official was elected "ad exigendum fictus, pensiones et census comunis Florentie" from the territories dominated for so long by the Bardi—Vernia and Mangona. For other instances of these centralizing tendencies at work, see *Balie,* II, f. 165 (Mar. 30, 1343). By the end of the Duke's tenure this trend had become much accelerated. *CCE,* II bis, f. 336 (July 24, 1343).

Nowhere was this tightening more evident than in the regulation of the Florentine *contado.* Commencing late in December of 1342, communal officials began to rectify abuses long encrusted by custom during earlier regimes: taxes, deliquent since 1331, were finally exacted; condemnations for failure to report the incidence of crimes perpetrated ten and fifteen years ago multiplied; those who went surety for the rectors of rural communes and parishes in arrears for more than a decade in *estimo* payments were forced to make restitution; sentences outstanding since the early thirties were executed against communities guilty of harboring criminals and exiles; obligations for cart service, castle guard, and road work were regularly enforced instead of being regarded as theoretical and tenuous.[61]

Brienne's *contado* policy was almost the exact antithesis of the easy sway that had become the hallmark of oligarchical rule. It is quite possible that during his tenure the overly ambitious program of establishing "a table of possessions" was begun. This "tavola" involved a survey of the tax liability, value, and ownership of all properties in the countryside. Not only would such an undertaking be of enormous value in the complex litigation involving the assets of bankrupt firms, titles, and inheritances, but it would also be singularly useful in determining the correctness of tax assessments. In the month of December, 1342, over thirty "measuratores" were deputized to measure the lands and holdings in the *contado* and district of Florence. Over the ensuing months of Brienne's brief tenure additional surveyors were dispatched throughout the countryside and outer reaches of the republic's domains to continue this arduous labor. Matteo Villani's comments about the impracticality of a later survey (1355) may have bearing upon the earlier effort, which likewise had to be abandoned because it proved too costly and time-consuming.[62]

Despite allegations of chroniclers that Brienne raised tax rates inordinately, the records of the *camera* bear witness to the contrary. If we examine his administration of the countryside we see that the rate for the rural *estimo* was only ten soldi per lira, not substantially different from earlier rates. As a matter of fact, the tax burden on rural domains was

[61] There are even examples of delinquencies of country communities dating as far back as the 1320's which were punished only with the advent of the Duke. Cf. *Ibid.,* f. 192 (Feb. 22, 1343), recording the execution of a condemnation—dating back to the 1320's—of a rural commune for failure to pay the salaries of its officials. The hamlet was required to pay an additional sum for this default. By early April of 1343 fines assessed against rural communities averaged the very substantial figure of five per day. *Ibid.,* fols. 205–58.

[62] *Ibid.,* fols. 33–38 (Dec. 4, 1342–Dec. 13, 1342). For Matteo's remarks as well as a discussion of this innovation, see E. Fiumi, "L'imposta diretta nei comuni medioevali della Toscana," *Studi in onore di Armando Sapori,* 343 ff.

lighter than formerly. Over the ten months and some few days of Brienne's rule, the rural *estimo* returned only 12,708 florins—almost 50 per cent less than its previous average yield. Certainly this drop was due in part to the current economic depression, but neither rates nor quotas were augmented. The same holds true for the rural levy on wine. This, too, remained at the antique rate of ten soldi *pro quolibet congio vini in comitatu et districtu Florenti[a]e*. The change that did occur was the increasing strictness of administrative procedure. In the month of December alone more than 100 requests were received by a special judge dealing with the rural *estimo*. With monotonous regularity these pleas were denied and inhabitants of the *contado* condemned for failure to pay delinquent taxes.[63]

Rural administration became more impartial and severe. Income from customs tolls collected in country towns was paid directly into the treasury of the republic instead of going first into the local treasury. So, too, were market tolls, gabelles on the slaughter of cattle, even petty charges for the use of certain communal bridges. Similarly, dues on fishing rights and for the privilege of maintaining fulling mills on the banks of Tuscan streams and rivers went directly into the *camera*. Much more significant, however, were the legions of officers dispatched to villages and hamlets to supervise the exaction of *prestanze*. There was also a tendency to make obligations territorial that were once personal. For instance, in 1342 the gabelle on nobles living in the countryside was assessed against the hamlet in which the individual established residence rather than on the particular family. An identical change occurred in the assessment of the *prestanza nobilium comitatus Florentie*.[64] Instead of assessing a loan against a particular family, the amount was obtained in the form of a tax added to the liability of the community.

It was precisely because Brienne did not desire to raise rates that he followed the milder alternative of tightening the existing structure. There was only one prominent exception, involving the imposition of an *estimo*

[63] A strenuous effort was made to establish an equitable balance between urban and rural assessments. The figure for the city was fixed so that the urban dweller would pay an impost almost twice as high as that of his rural counterpart. This was no easy task since both tax registration and methods recording title were exceedingly complex. All of this was rendered still more difficult because patterns of investment were dramatically diverse and places of habitation for purposes of tax assessment extremely vague. At the end of April, 1343, a single official was elected to coordinate both *estimi*. CCE, I bis, f. 255r. Cf. also *ibid.*, fols. 26r–205 for other details concerning this tributary measure. Folio 181 (Feb. 15, 1343) contains the notation of the rate at which this levy was being imposed.

[64] *Ibid.*, f. 175r (Feb. 14, 1343), f. 214 (Mar. 15, 1343).

on the city, and in this case it took months to collect individual taxes since the tax machinery was cumbersome. Early in October citizens were obliged to draw up statements (*portate*) declaring the nature and extent of all real and personal property. Special judges and notaries were recruited to examine these *portate;* months later the first tribute was garnered. (The date of its imposition—July 15, 1343—is of interest. On July 26 revolution erupted and Brienne was soon overthrown. Thus the imposition of this latest tax could have done little to ingratiate the Duke with the citizenry, and perhaps his removal is not unrelated to his last fiscal gambit.[65]) It was many months (five or six) before Brienne could realize sizable income from this *estimo*. There could be no alleviation of the pressing fiscal bind unless the policies of increasingly impersonal government proved successful.

## VI

Brienne and his circle were confronted with the challenge of surviving the fiscal crisis by enforcing the law against the patricians who, a few months earlier, had been his most articulate proponents. At first he had appeared bent upon rewarding his adherents. The ban of exile against the Bardi, Frescobaldi, Nerli, and Rossi had been promptly rescinded; the Draconian Ordinances of Justice, imposing harsh penalties on criminous magnates, were allowed to fall into abeyance. Hitherto liable for double the penalty paid by commoners, the Adimari, Bardi, or Pazzi were now subject to penalties equal to those imposed on commoners. Furthermore, magnate Admiri, Bardi, Bordoni, Brunelleschi, Donati, Cavalcanti, and Rossi regularly served Brienne as castellans and in other high *contado* posts.

But in early December of 1342, this comfortable regimen was disrupted when Brienne's judges undertook a systematic investigation of the alleged peculations and other abuses practiced by the former high government bureaucracy. Numerous indictments on charges of malfeasance in office followed. Many of Brienne's most eloquent spokesmen felt the stiff hand of justice. The treasurer of The Twenty was judged guilty of defrauding

[65] On the mechanics of this impost, see *Diplomatico,* Cestello (Oct. 23, 1342), cited by C. Paoli, *op. cit.,* p. 75. Cf. *CCE,* I bis, f. 41r (Dec. 17, 1342) for a notation of the urban *estimo,* which stood at 5 soldi per 100 lire. In connection with the onset of strong disaffection against the Duke's rule, it should also be observed that almost at the same time as the new *estimo* was implemented, Brienne and his advisers saw fit to exact a very onerous *prestanza.* On a single day—July 19, 1343—only a week before the citizen uprising, this forced loan brought 16,702 florins, 16 soldi, 8 denari, into the *camera. Ibid.,* fols. 335–35r.

the commune of monies budgeted for defense and a variety of other frauds. Soon Adimari, Bardi, Bordoni, Ricci, Rucellai, Spini, Tornaquinci, and a host of other first families stood convicted on similar counts and were fined from 1,600 lire to over 6,000 lire. Many of these men were sentenced because they had agreed to go surety for a convicted friend and office holder.[66]

The most thorough inquiry into corruption in high places probably took place sometime in December or January of 1342–43 (the document is undated). The notorious judge Simone da Norcia conducted an investigation into the activities of The Twenty during their brief tenure. The evidence presented against them before his tribunal was specific and compelling. The cautious economic historian Armando Sapori rather recently opted for the truth of the bill of particulars against The Twenty. A judicial commission appointed by a subsequent signory, the popular regime, also judged The Twenty guilty as charged. This time the condemnation was entered in the treasury records on August 27, 1344, and was not reversed. The principal accusation involved the fraudulent imposition of *prestanze* and the usurpation of communal monies. Apparently the inquest held by Norcia was suddenly suspended and the verdict "Absolutio offitii Viginti" entered on the trial record. It would seem that with Norcia's inquiry Brienne and his advisers realized they had overreached themselves. Subsequently members of The Twenty began to make restitution, suggesting their complicity, and key figures such as the Bardi commenced to loan sizable sums to the nearly bankrupt treasury.[67] The despot, however, did not go as far in the direction of impersonal administration of justice as did the popular regime to follow.

There had been previous ambiguity of policy in other areas of Brienne's rule. One of the most cogent reasons for the original patrician support accorded Brienne was the desire of hard-pressed firms for protection from overanxious creditors. Their desires were realized on October 26, 1342, when Taddeo Antella—soon to be appointed ambassador by the despot—was granted immunity from creditors for his company for a period of three years. This decree was immediately extended to all near-bankrupt companies and justified with the bland formula that this has been done for the honor and well-being of the republic and its merchants. In certain

[66] For payments of substantial fines by Adimari, Bardi, Bordoni, Spini, Tornaquinci, see *ibid.*, fols. 175r, 204r–211. For the conviction of the treasurer of The Twenty, see *ibid.*, f. 80r (Dec. 24, 1342). Cf. also *ibid.*, f. 80 (Dec. 23, 1342) for a condemnation of an officer of The Twenty in charge of maintaining weapons of the commune.

[67] *Balie,* II, fols. 143–152; *CCE,* I bis, f. 350.

instances the petitioners advised the lord that they were already in the process of making settlement with their creditors. A moratorium gave companies additional time to liquidate certain of their assets—especially land, which glutted the market at favorable terms.[68]

Naturally such a program found favor among the mercantile patriciate if it did not go beyond the bounds of propriety. During subsequent months many bankrupts of the preceding two decades were restored to good standing within the community merely upon payment of a token sum into the *camera*. This seemingly arbitrary procedure went beyond the pale, reversing without even benefit of legal formality decrees of bankruptcy promulgated long ago by that august guild tribunal, the Court Merchant. Equally disquieting must have been the fact that the beneficiaries of this largesse were in so many instances men of the lower guilds.[69]

If Brienne's moratorium of October 26 was highly acceptable to the mercantile patriciate, its corollary, the decree of November 22, was not. Brienne's support had come from almost bankrupt companies seeking not only relief from anxious creditors but also the establishment of a fiscal policy that would permit the government to honor its outstanding obligations. Antella, Bardi, Strozzi, Uzzano, found themselves with precious capital tied up in frozen government loans. Although no steps had been taken for their amortization, it was hoped that Brienne would release a certain amount of the income (*entrata*) for interest payments. The mercantile patriciate had even indicated that it was willing to accept lower interest rates.

Unfortunately, through the first months of the despot's tenure the only additional monies the treasury could garner derived either from tighter administration (increased returns from communal properties, fines for peculation, etc.) or from the trifling sums that could be extracted from such expedients as increasing the tax on pawnbrokers. Since the inception of his lordship Brienne had regulated the activities of these "manifest usurers" in such a manner as to collect the maximum revenue. Each month these *feneratores* were compelled to pay a fee in the form of fine for plying their trade "hateful as it was in the sight of God and man."[70] However,

[68] *Balie,* II, fols. 11–12. A. Sapori in *La crisi della compagnie mercantili,* pp. 148 ff., presents what surely must stand as a classic study in this particular area of economic history. It should be observed, however, that medieval bankruptcies are more episodic than the author contends; thus certain of the fallen companies soon regrouped their forces and resumed activity again in the economic life of the polis.

[69] Cf. *CCE,* I bis, fols. 143r, 266, 284r ff.

[70] *Ibid.,* fols. 10, 13r (Oct. 25–26, 1342).

these fees totaled only a few hundred lire at best and contributed little to loosen the fiscal bind. There were new revenues from the domains, but the *entrata* was meager—less than a thousand lire in November. Although this represented a slight improvement, income was still inadequate to meet current needs, let alone permit the lord of the city to assume past obligations.[71]

While the cumbersome machinery for the collection of the urban *estimo* was being so laboriously constructed, Brienne did try to live within the limits of the existing budget. He was guided by the fiscal decrees of The Twenty, who had relied upon the forced loan and the hearth tax for additional revenue. In the first months of his tenure Brienne merely prorogued these measures. Such a mild response proved far from adequate, however, since the fiscal position of the *camera* had deteriorated from week to week if not day to day. Income from the gabelles dwindled, and Brienne and his advisers were forced to grant remission of payment to the numerous buyers of these levies. Thus in late November of 1342, when the lord of the city decreed that income from gabelles would no longer be assigned to communal creditors, he was indeed charting a prudent course.

The decree itself merits closer inspection, for it lacks the rhetorical flourishes so common to this variety of unpleasant pronouncement. Without the slightest evasion it states that, considering the absence of funds—especially for salaries of communal officials and the defense of the republic—there was no alternative except the suspension of the assignment of all incoming revenues to creditors. Although a new tax might have been imposed, the yield would not have been immediate because of the months required for installing new tax machinery. It is doubtful that the declaration of late November effected even the slightest change, for creditors were receiving neither interest nor principal. It did assure them that the unpleasant condition would obtain well into the foreseeable future, which was impolitic and must have done little to inspire political confidence among Brienne's former adherents. Perhaps this proclamation, however impolitic, was intended to announce publicly, though obliquely, a cogent reason for the *estimo*. Only when abundant monies from this impost reached the *camera* could communal creditors hope for restitution.

Over the next months Brienne's fiscal program remained moderate; the hearth tax was renewed and two additional *prestanze* (not overly large) were levied. Such moderation was possible after Brienne signed a treaty

[71] This was the case despite the election of special "rationcinatores," according to an ordinance recently made by the Duke. *Ibid.*, fols. 13r–28r (Oct. 26, 1342–Nov. 25, 1342).

with Pisa officially terminating the costly war. This was one of the few acts to win favor for Brienne in the eyes of the embittered Giovanni Villani. The chronicler went so far as to contend that it was "the most honorable" treaty that could have been consummated in those inauspicious times.[72] In point of fact the despot's actions set the tone for succeeding regimes: the old imperialism had proven as expensive as it was bootless. In the autumn of 1342 the city of Florence entered into a protracted interval of near-isolation, thereby avoiding burdensome subsidies to fickle allies and staggering outlays for mercenaries. In the future any regime attempting to navigate the treacherous shoals of internal politics and crippled by a depleted treasury found it easier to curtail territorial expansion than to impose new and unpopular taxes. In the case of Brienne, renouncing imperial ambitions offered the best prospect of averting communal bankruptcy. Sadly for him the peace policy so ardently pursued by subsequent regimes was not popular at first; it was muttered throughout the city that he had been engaged by the republic to wage war and all he had done was make peace.[73]

There are quite complete treasury records for almost all of Brienne's tenure which demonstrate that he and his circle single-mindedly followed the policy of reducing expenditures for mercenaries. Only in the last months, when menaced by internal disaffection, was this course reversed, and even then outlays stood well below previous figures, never totaling more than 10,000 florins a month. Earlier, these totals reached three and sometimes four times this amount. Transactions during Brienne's regime can be calculated with precision, since all soldiers of the republic were required by law to pay a tax of 5 per cent of their salary into the *camera* and treasury records of the period were kept with unaccustomed exactitude. Payments for banners or the repair of helmets or even the salary of the ducal barber were duly recorded.[74]

No matter what economies Brienne might effect through the reduction of mercenary forces or exact bookkeeping, the deterioration of the public fisc could not be reversed. Revenues from all the staples of the Florentine tributary system continued to decline alarmingly. The customs toll, the bulwark of the communal fisc, had reached a high of 90,200 florins in

[72] *Balie,* II, fols. 29–30. For a transcription of this decree, see C. Paoli, *op. cit.,* pp. 181–82.
[73] *Cronica,* XII, 8. When the popular regime which assumed power shortly after the downfall of the Duke signed a peace with Lucca, the chronicler opined that the despot's peace treaty had been more honorable than that of the government.
[74] *CCE,* I bis, fols. 25–27.

1336–38. During the Duke's regime it was collected at a monthly rate that would have yielded an annual revenue of just above 52,000 florins, had his tenure lasted for a full year instead of ten months. The gabelle on salt showed an even more dramatic decline, losing almost two-thirds of its value. Comparable decreases were registered by every other indirect levy in the tributary arsenal. No other interval in Florentine history (for which there is extensive documentation) was the scene of such startling depression in public finance.

Brienne's penny-pinching regime bore little resemblance to the flamboyant, extravagant signory that scandalized the chroniclers Giovanni Villani and Marchionne di Coppo Stefani. But in late December and early January of 1343, ducal officials began to stimulate their moral outrage. Dispensations from past verdicts of the Florentine courts were retailed in odd lots; hundreds of Florentines were the beneficiaries. Much to the consternation of traditional-minded burghers, an outlaw or a political renegade could be restored to honorable citizenship upon payment of a fee into the *camera.* Most provoking to the politically orthodox were the many dispensations sold to the loathed Ghibellines. Some who received the coveted dispensation had fought under the dreaded banner of the Holy Roman Emperor, Henry VII, and others were former allies of such latter-day Ghibelline heretics as Uguccione and Castruccio. Among the more prominent and reprehensible of Florentine families to win the prize were the Amadori, Corbizzi, Falconieri, Falconetti, and Pulci. However, the proceedings leading to dispensation were conducted with scrupulous respect for legalities; both the captains of the Guelf party and the priorate concurred in approving grants to each outlawed clan. Again the motive force behind so many of these remissions was the chronic need for revenue, not another incidence of Brienne's erratic, bizarre behavior as the chroniclers contended.[75]

Brienne continued this stopgap, lackluster program partly because he had no desire to augment the rates of indirect levies. Clearly, by late winter of 1342 his warmest support came from the middle class and the poor of the city—precisely the strata of society that would be most adversely affected by an increase in gabelles. Eventually substantial reductions in such unpopular levies as the gabelles on wine and meat were

[75] The meeting between the Duke, the priors, and the captains of the Guelf party occurred on Dec. 31, 1342. For other instances of collaboration between these august captains and the regime of Brienne, see *Capitoli,* XXII, fols. 11–22. For the work of the captains and Brienne's lieutenants in effecting pardons for these ancient and dishonored families, see *CCE,* I bis, fols. 70–92.

decreed, intensifying the dilemma of the treasury, since returns from the *estimo* did not begin to enter the communal coffers until early spring of 1343. Only then was the full impact of the despot's economic program felt.

From April until July the ducal signory became increasingly severe. First, the dreaded *estimo* was levied, not once but several times. (Incidentally, as a consequence, the state of the treasury balance was much improved.) Second, Brienne's vicars imposed a special *prestanza—impositam pluribus civibus*. This levy, in the form of a short-term loan, was assessed against the patrimony of a handful of leading patricians. There were additional special loans from top echelon houses such as the Antella, Bardi, and Peruzzi—again the very clans who first received ducal favors: the removal of a ban of exile, the reduction of a fine, a moratorium on debts. A neat device was employed whereby a 5 per cent tax was imposed upon the treasury payment when the treasury paid interest on these special new loans. The effect of this stratagem was to reduce interest rates to 2 per cent and to transform these new loans into virtual benevolences. Lastly, numerous charges and obligations were revived from the murky communal past. Some of these entailed ancient civic responsibilities such as the payment of a pound of silver from rural communes once domiciles of Tuscan feudatories. Others involved the resurrection of lapsed traditions such as the payment of the equivalent of a certain number of pounds of wax into the *camera* on the festival of Florence's patron saint, John the Baptist. More lucrative was the tightening supervision over all who rented space in communal markets or kept shop on public bridges and squares. These measures were designed to improve the fiscal position of the treasury, and by late April of 1343 they had some effect.[76]

*Trecento* chronicles as well as recent historical monographs concur in the jaundiced observation that Brienne's administration was corrupt and his officials a rapacious and grafting lot. Again the documents of the period make such a judgment difficult to sustain. Although we must leave the ultimate honesty of these officials to God and the metahistorian, it would seem that, given the high degree of systematization and centralization of public finance, there would be little official sanction of lax or corrupt administrators. Furthermore, after Brienne's overthrow an ex-

[76] For example, in the interim between April 15, 1343, and May 15, 1343, communal income from indirect levies rose some 200 per cent over the average recorded by each of the preceding 6 months. Moreover, we observe that it is precisely at this time that the Duke's retainers commence to administer communal markets more efficiently and to tend more meticulously to the renting of communal shops.

tensive audit of the management of the communal treasury was undertaken, by a regime profoundly hostile to tyrants in general and Brienne in particular. The judges and notaries—some of the most eminent legal men in the community—concurred after arduous inquiry that under the aegis of the Duke, the *camera* had operated "bene et legaliter" and that "nullum dolum, fraudem, negligentiam, falsitatem seu culpam" had been perpetrated. Surprisingly enough, given the magnitude and vehemence of contemporary criticism of Brienne's fiscal policies, there was even a sizable balance in the *camera.* The *introytus* (income) during his tenure stood at 942,223 lire, 14 soldi, 4 denari.[77] Such a respectable albeit not abundant balance was a tribute to the rigorous fiscal program Brienne had initiated, at least over the last four months of his tenure. Unfortunately such a stern program was fated to antagonize further the very interests that had elevated the French nobleman to power. It does, however, offer some positive testimony to those who would depict his rule as an interval of fiscal chicanery and economic mismanagement. Perhaps just as many were disturbed by the virtues and efficiency of his government as were offended by its ineptitude and corruption.[78]

## VII

Centralization of authority proceeded apace over the last months of Brienne's rule. In a single month, May of 1343, there were sixty-two surveyors deputized to undertake a scrupulous listing of "terras et possessiones" in the *contado*. These *magistri et mensuratores* were to make this survey for the purpose of better assessing communal tribute. Simultaneously, scores of notaries and twelve judges (two for each section of the city) were charged with the responsibility of further refining the *estimo* so that the July returns would be even higher. A battery of officers personally appointed by the ruler supervised the operation of measures and balances used by merchants. These officials collected the handsome salary of 160 florins for working only one month, June of 1343. In addition notaries were chosen to enforce statutes requiring payment of gabelles on wine cask seals. More and more power was exercised by the lord of the city, who was now almost universally despised. Virtually every florin collected from Florentine domains was paid directly to the ducal vicar, who in turn

[77] Giovanni Villani's *Cronica* of course furnishes the principal materials for such an interpretation. Among modern commentators, Cesare Paoli has followed this tack most sedulously, while Armando Sapori has expressed the most serious reservations.
[78] *Diplomatico,* Cestello (May 13, 1344).

deposited the money in the treasury. Payments for the use of communal mills and bridge and river tolls were recorded daily by the treasurer instead of being permitted to accumulate for a month or more.[79]

At this juncture, attention should be directed to the legalistic aura surrounding the treasury records. These dry lists reveal that Brienne paid cash for almost everything purchased. Even during his last precarious days a series of disbursements to the house of Peruzzi for the purchase of a few bolts of cloth was duly recorded. Many were the loans that were repaid even in those tense days. Still more telling, Brienne's vicar made restitution for all properties confiscated from private citizens for the purpose of enlarging the ducal palace or extending the city squares or erecting new city gates. Through the end of his tenure, payment was made to the former owners of these properties.[80]

Nowhere is this penchant for legalism more evident than in Brienne's treatment of the lower orders of Florentine society. He initiated policies that struck his contemporaries as the beginnings of a social revolution, but even they were compelled to concede that Brienne had a fine eye for the niceties of the law. Much of this legislation has been considered by modern scholars to have been extremely favorable to the interests of the minor guildsmen as well as to the unorganized masses (*il popolo minuto*). His scandalized contemporaries would heartily have concurred. For the rest of the century, whenever an outraged working class pressed its demands upon a tottering signory, they conjured the menacing spector of the duke to frighten more generous-minded compatriots.

Brienne's policies were ill-founded not because they were illegal or even extralegal but rather because the *minuti* could not be relied upon.[81] During Brienne's term of office he sought outside the framework of the oligarchy to create support for his signory. Almost from the beginning he and his counselors appeared to have sensed that upper-class support must perforce atrophy and that it would be essential to gain the adherence of several groups: the men of the fourteen lower guilds, the skilled masters under the jurisdiction of the seven greater guilds, and the many day laborers employed by the wool manufacturers. Early in his tenure he granted a moratorium to the vintners on all debts owed the commune. Tax concessions were decreed for the benefit of sellers of oil, retail food merchants, vendors of dried meat, and butchers. A cask maker and an

[79] Cf. *CCE,* I bis, fols. 345, 352, 359r, 362.
[80] *Ibid.,* fols. 357r, 363r, 369.
[81] Cf. Stefani, rub. 564, 565, 575, 578.

ironmonger were appointed to the exalted office of prior, and a dealer in used clothing became *gonfaloniere di giustitia* (chief prior and standard bearer of the commune). Never before in the annals of the commune were so many newcomers elevated to such prominent positions. It is worth noting that these *novi cives* were either affluent parvenus matriculated in the major guilds or the most eminent members of the minor guild masters.[82]

The single act that had the most enduring effect upon the socio-economic structure of Florentine guild life occurred November 23, 1342.[83] Sedulously and scrupulously Brienne had courted the great guild masters of the *Arte della Lana.* By early November, he won the unanimous consent of the *lanaiuoli,* who gave him authority to intervene in guild affairs. He was granted the power to reject or accept guild petitions as well as to make key appointments in the guild hierarchy.

On November 23, as a result of this newly won *auctoritas,* the dyers of the city (the most prosperous of all the republic's artisans) requested that they be liberated from the harsh yoke of the *Lana.* It could have been only divine providence that created Brienne's present benign signory, said the petitioning dyers, since if it were not for his lordship they would have been forced to abandon their craft, so onerous had the rule of the wool masters become. Brienne accepted their tearful petition, as he did in so many other instances, but this time his response was much more dramatic: he permitted the dyers of the city to form their own guild. The alarming revolutionary significance of this step was not lost to Florentines of the *trecento.* Heretofore there had been only twenty-one legally accredited *arti* in the city. In accordance with the Florentine constitution only fully matriculated members of one of these twenty-one corporations were judged citizens possessing complete political rights. By acknowledging the claims of the *tintores* not only was a twenty-second guild created but, much more important, the political aspirations of the lower orders in the Florentine artisan and shopkeeper world were acknowledged if not encouraged. From 1342 until 1382 petty craftsmen, small manufacturers,

[82] Cf. *Balie,* II, f. 5 (Oct. 6, 1342); fols. 21–23 (Nov. 5, 1342). Worth recalling is the repeated use by the Duke of *novi cives* in the prestigious posts of diplomatic emissaries. Cf. *CCE,* I bis, f. 20, where Ser Blaxius Neri de Colle is noted as ambassador to Arezzo. At folio 29, we have a certain Ser Magus ser Pepi serving as an ambassador with one of the Bardi. Shortly thereafter, a Panciatichi, newly come from outside Florence, holds the esteemed position of ambassador to Arezzo. Cf. *ibid.,* f. 34r. For the names of other *novi cives* in Brienne's regime, see *ibid.,* fols. 66r, 108r, 112r, 128, 149r–161.
[83] *Balie,* II, fols. 92–93; C. Paoli, *op. cit.,* pp. 82–83.

shopkeepers, and artisans repeatedly sought full political rights, which of course led to agitation for new *arti*.

Fanned by the lord's generosity such agitation not only threatened the hegemony of the patriciate but challenged the absolute economic control exercised by the *arti maggiori* over auxiliary craftsmen such as the dyers and soapers. Although the decree of November 1342 cut only a chink in the armor of *maggiori* domination, it was a precursor of openings to come. The right of the dyers to form their own *arte* was annulled soon after the overthrow of the Duke, but their position in the guild world was altered once and for all. They and their peers were accorded a greater voice in guild affairs and declared eligible for all major offices in both the *arti* and the republic.

The dyers and their confreres the soapers and wool washers had complained that under the cruel tutelage of the *Lana* they were reduced to pauperage. The wool manufacturers never settled their accounts promptly, therefore, lamented the dyers, they and their cohorts had been compelled to wait four and sometimes five years for any compensation. Equally vexing, they might be obliged to accept merchandise instead of cash. There was no recourse, no remedy (even the most mild, such as petition or protest) open to these auxiliary craftsmen. Any request for redress would be judged conspiratorial if not subversive by the patrician-dominated communal courts. So absolute was the authority of the *lanaiuoli* that any complaint had to be filed with the *Lana* consuls. Further, the patrician consuls alone fixed the prices for dying cloth; the *tintores* were therefore compelled to labor at the behest of their lords and masters and to pay a tax for each bolt of cloth. When the dyers petitioned Brienne to liberate them from "the yoke of the aforesaid lanaiuoli," they contended they would then be in a better position "to serve your lordship more *viriliter*." Brienne laid down regulations for this new guild, which was to remain directly under the jurisdiction of an official selected by him, and stated specifically that all actions taken must be with his "consensus." Any measures contrary to his express instructions were to be deemed invalid.

Thus a new guild was established in a manner quite legal and proper. It was the first overt threat to the constitutional hegemony of the *maggiori* over the guild world since the late thirteenth century. It bestowed belated recognition on the most affluent of the craftsmen formerly under *Lana* jurisdiction. Brienne's concern seems to have been to win the allegiance of these highly skilled masters. In addition he used his power to liberalize

conditions in the many trades and crafts associated with Florence's greatest industry. He inaugurated a pervasive lightening of controls and a general relaxation of the hitherto tight guild structure. Although some of this release remained rhetorical, it was nonetheless significant in that it represented an appreciation if not an effective response to long-standing problems.[84] Brienne had weakened the absolute control of the *lanaiuoli* over the auxiliary masters, but the difference between a dyer and a wool manufacturer was one of degree: each still employed labor, possessed capital, and owned machinery. But when the despot sought to tamper with the relationships between *il popolo minuto* (worker) and *maggiori* (great employer), he went too far. The chronicler Stefani tells us that the French nobleman was accustomed to calling *il popolo minuto* "le bon populе" and that the very name "Ciompi" (the association of wool workers to revolt just a generation later, in the summer of 1378) was bestowed on the working class by the followers of Brienne.[85]

There is evidence that Brienne began an intense courtship of the working class in November of 1342. Here again he proved a most proper suitor. First he requested permission from the parent organization, the *Lana,* to appoint a special official with power to regulate the activities of that third of the city's population gainfully employed in the manufacture of wool. Two weeks later he selected an official over the wool carders and shortly thereafter an officer with comparable powers to supervise the cloth shearers. Later he selected another official to oversee the day laborers. Each of his appointees received a salary from the public treasury and not, as formerly, from the *Lana.* Again the jurisdiction of the *arti maggiori* had been further diminished.[86]

Officials and workers were organized into quasi-military companies, issued uniforms, and even furnished with a coat of arms (a shield bearing a lamb). This act, unprecedented in the annals of the city, was so memorable that during the Ciompi revolution of 1378, a generation later, the workers of the city rallied under the same emblem before going into action with sword and torch. The companies were designed to replace the armed

[84] For changes in the preamble to certain decrees of the *Lana* masters expressing greater consideration for the feelings, if not the well-being, of those under this guild's jurisdiction, see N. Rodolico, *Il popolo minuto (1343–1378),* (Bologna: 1899), pp. 36, 141; *Lana,* XLV, fols. 57–81r.

[85] Stefani, rub. 575.

[86] *CCE,* I bis, f. 25 (Nov. 16, 1342). Later in his reign, additional officials were appointed by the Duke to govern the activities of the many thousand *lana* workers. Worth noting is the fact that several of these officials—for example, Ser Andrea Lapi of Pistoia and Ser Bartolo ser Segne—were *novi cives.* Cf. *ibid.,* f. 363r (June 30, 1343).

organizations of the *arti*.[87] It had been largely the responsibility of the major guilds to provide a militia to serve whenever the commune was in danger. The militia was traditionally drawn from the ranks of the *arti maggiori,* and membership was a token of civic esteem. To convert this venerable institution into an army dominated by lowly workers was an outrage to burgher pride.

The insult was compounded at Easter time when Brienne staged a grand tournament. Among processions in the square preceding the jousting were six brigades of *il popolo minuto,* festively attired in unaccustomed splendor for the great holiday. The magnates and *popolani* were disgusted by their presumption, but their contempt turned to awe when the bands of men were announced as "The Powerful Ones." For the next great holiday, June 1—the name day of the City of the Baptist—the Duke ordered a grand carnival with an abundance of food, drink, and music. Again the six brigades marched; again the burghers were scandalized. After the parade *il popolo minuto* swarmed through the narrow streets dancing, singing, and shouting the Duke's praises: "Long live the just *Signore* who punishes the mighty and has no fear of them!"[88]

The chronicler Stefani acidly etched his anguished insight: "He ought to have remembered that [*il popolo minuto*] would not treat him better than Christ, who was in truth a just *Signore.*" The morose narrator concluded that events were simply beyond *"human or divine reason."* The *minuti* were unworthy of so great an honor, and of course *boni cives* must despise Brienne for "magnifying the lowly." When the greater guildsmen were ordered to take part in the celebration for the patron saint, they marched without banners to display their disgust and horror at Brienne's immorality. Was a sacred festival the appropriate time to display the pomp of an earthly lord?[89] After 1343 tournaments fell into such disrepute that they were not again staged on a large scale for almost half a century.

Efforts to win the support of *il popolo minuto* increased during the latter part of Brienne's signory. Whereas earlier regimes had granted

[87] N. Rodolico, *I Ciompi,* p. 142; A. Doren, *Le arti fiorentine* (Florence: 1940), II, 230–31.

[88] G. Villani, VIII, 8; Stefani, rubs, 575, 566; G. Scaramella, *Firenze allo scoppio del tumulto dei Ciompi* (Pisa: 1914), p. 71.

[89] A. Doren, *Die Florentiner Wollentuchindustrie* (Stuttgart: 1901), pp. 237 ff.; Stefani, rub. 575. Related to the despot's efforts to construct a popular base for his signory was his appointment of 600 "pauperes qui fecerunt custodiam nocturnam. . . ." Surely such an assemblage of the dispossessed would not be reassuring to the already scandalized burghers of the city. For a reference to the formation of such a body, see *P,* XXXI, f. 145 (Mar. 26, 1344).

judicial dispensation almost exclusively to *maggiori* and *magnates* and regularly rejected petitions and pleas of *minuti,* Brienne in December of 1343 granted remission, dispensation, and absolution to wool beaters condemned to death by the Foreign Official of the *Lana* for conspiring with other workers against the masters. A plea for leniency was accepted from a *minuto* convicted of sedition because he had harangued a group of workers, addressing them as "slaves of the guilds," and exhorted them to overthrow the government and burn the tax records. Remission was even bestowed upon petty tradesmen who violated the communal ordinances fixing the price of goods and services. Fines assessed against small grain vendors and sellers of dried meats were substantially reduced.[90]

Brienne had altered the style of polities in the polis: the personal, laissez-faire rule that had obtained only for the *maggiori* and magnates now spread to the lower orders. The officer in charge of the *Platea* of *Or San Michele* (the communal grain market) fined a vintner 500 lire for selling wine from casks that did not bear the communal seal; an appeal was made to Brienne and the vintner required to pay only a pittance. A baker selling wares after hours or adulterating flour received the same generous treatment. These pardons, remissions, and dispensations were granted with scrupulous regard for legal niceties. Special entries were even made in the treasury records indicating that these cases were settled after thorough review by a properly constituted tribunal of the republic.[91]

Events of July through September of 1343, following the ouster of the despot, suggested that efforts to curry the favor of the lowly had not been in vain, for at no time in communal history was there such intense class unrest as in the late summer and early fall of 1343. The remnants of the brigades organized by Brienne served as a nucleus for organized protest by *minuti* against the resumption of the undisputed hegemony of the guild masters. Attacks were launched against the palace of the *Arte della Lana* by incensed workers. At least one high-born Florentine led a cantankerous band of several thousand wool workers through the streets of the city shouting: "Long live the worker! Death to the rich! Down with gabelles!"

[90] From the beginning of his tenure, Brienne's grain official, Tommaso da Assisi, reduced fines collected from vendors of grain convicted of a variety of malpractices by as much as 75 per cent. *CGE,* I bis, f. 16r (Oct. 30, 1342). Cf. also *ibid.,* fols. 52r–64. For dispensations granted vintners, see especially fols. 52r–53.

Instances of remission conferred upon *minuti* for convictions on capital charges will be found on fols. 46r, 62r, 187r.

[91] *Ibid.,* fols. 34, 52r–53, 72–79, 333r. Most significant was the dispensation granted *minori* by the Duke's officials for violations of anti-monopoly ordinances. Cf. *ibid.,* f. 120.

Distraught *minuti* stormed the palatial, fortresslike residences of leading *maggiori* crying: "Death to the magistrates and to all rich men!" In response leading *maggiori* prophesied the powerful would soon lay the upstarts low.[92]

With the outburst of revolution, Brienne's attempts to broaden the base of support for his signory were put to the test. The despot had perhaps at best a few hundred troops at his disposal and therefore could not hope to subdue the patricians without popular support. Moreover, when the city grew restive Brienne's own lieutenants proved unreliable. But that some of the city's wool workers and butchers remained loyal indicates that the most class conscious of the republic's middling and lower orders were not impervious to Brienne's blandishments and unaccustomed largesse.

On July 2, 1343, the despot consummated an elaborate alliance with Mastino della Scala of Verona and Taddeo Pepoli, lord of Bologna. Giovanni Villani observed that "The good will of Florence would have been of more utility." Disappointed in Brienne because he failed to repeal the harsh Ordinances of Justice, the *magnati* were disaffected. The *popolani* were incensed, according to Villani, because the Duke had deprived them of property and "had removed privileges in the matter of taxation from the citizenry." Certainly the peasants and small farmers did not abandon their traditionally apolitical stance. Brienne had not conspired with the elements to bring about a poor harvest or been responsible for the rising price of grain.[93]

Several conspiracies evolved. Some of the malcontents clustered around the Bishop of Florence, Agnolo Acciaiuoli. This scion of the great banking house was joined by five of the most prominent Bardi, the two leading Rossi, and several Frescobaldi. The heads of the magnate house of Donati were sought out. Prominent among them were the magnate Cavicciuli and Pazzi. Another group of conspirators joined forces with the magnate Adimari. Of the many commoner families plotting the Duke's overthrow, the Albizzi, Aldobrandini, Bordoni, Medici, and Rucellai were the most eminent.

At nine o'clock on the morning of the day of St. Anne (July 26, 1343) the workers and masters closed their shops. Crowds assembled waving the

[92] Cf. N. Rodolico, *Il popolo minuto,* pp. 48, 69–70, 140; Stefani, rub. 568; G. Villani, XII, 23. For a reference to the attacks against the palace of the *lanaiuoli,* see *Lana,* XLI, f. 117r.
[93] G. Villani, VIII, 13, 16.

banners of the commune and the standards of *il popolo*. Mobs commenced to chant "To death with the Duke and his followers!" while others shouted "Long live the people and the commune of Florence and liberty!"[94] While *il popolo* laid siege to Brienne's palace a solemn reconciliation between magnates and leading *popolani* was effected on the far side of the Arno. In true medieval fashion eternal friendship was sworn, kisses of peace exchanged, and then the patriciate rode into battle.

The Duke and 400 armed men were trapped inside the palace by an incensed mob bent on vendetta. His retainers and mercenaries had only biscuits and vinegar, and water was low. Meanwhile the insurgents were joined by troops from neighboring Siena, San Miniato, and Prato. Insurrection against the ducal vicars erupted in Arezzo, and the Pistoians rose up to eradicate that symbol of Florentine domination, the loathed *Fortezza*. Volterra and other subject cities renounced Brienne's lordship in particular and Florentine hegemony in general. Thus an empire constructed over several generations was decimated. By July 28 the last vestiges of the Seigneur's power had disappeared and a new regime was installed. The new short-lived signory was staffed by personnel almost identical to The Twenty and represented a futile attempt to resurrect the ancient gentle paideia.

## VIII

The usually laconic Stefani grew suddenly expansive and opined that in the early summer of 1343 the greater guildsmen of the city were anxious to ally with the magnates, believing these nobles would prove tractable political companions. The experiences of August and September of 1343, avers Stefani, demonstrated that *maggiori* expectations and confidence had been misplaced. Villani contended that the aristocratic coalition that ruled the polis from late July through late September of 1343 had been created by high-born *popolani* who co-opted those magnates who had

[94] Giovanni Villani provides an ample and masterful description of this revolution of St. Anne's Day. Cf. XII, 17; Stefani, rub. 577. An undated document that appears to be a fragment of a provision enacted between September of 1343 and the outbreak of the Black Death states that the signory, considering the liberation of the people and the commune from the "tyrannical yolk of the Duke of Athens on St. Anne's Day," liberated all paupers and debtors who owed less than twenty-five florins from the prisons of the republic. Likewise, those convicted of bearing illegal arms or engaging in games of chance were to be freed. Cf. *LF*, XXVIII, fols. 138–39r.

fought against Brienne and were both law abiding and sober citizens. He stressed this last point: the chosen magnates were among the most upright and responsible of the city's *grandi,* not lawless and obstreperous like so many of their peers. However, examination of the personnel and the policies of this short-lived signory reveals a dimension not conveyed by the chroniclers.

Upon the ouster of Brienne, six citizens were appointed to assume magisterial power. Of their number, Antonio Albizzi had been one of The Twenty as well as a member of special *balie* elected during the thirties to raise money and conduct the ambitious foreign policy. Taddeo Antella had been similarly involved in the formulation of oligarchical policies and later supported the lordship of Brienne in the communal councils. Soon he undertook several diplomatic missions for the despot and was as you will recall the beneficiary of a decree granting his company a moratorium on all debts. Francesco Brunelleschi, also identified with the oligarchical politics of the thirties, likewise served Brienne as ambassador to Volterra and the Romagna. Berto Frescobaldi, scion of the great banking house and ardent supporter of the Bardi in the rebellion of November, 1340, acted as *podestà* and castellan for the former despot. Paolo Bordoni was a brother of one of The Twenty and served as ambassador for the Duke. Only Nepo Spini, last of these magistrates, appears to have been identified neither with the government of the oligarchs nor of the despot.[95]

The Fourteen who exercised the signory differed little in family background or political experience from the Six. Represented were those hardy perennials of the civic and economic wars, the Bardi, Peruzzi, Ricci, and Strozzi. An Adimari who had advocated giving power to Brienne and served as his ambassador, castellan, and vicar was among them, as was a Biliotti who had loaned money to the Duke and served as comptroller of funds for his armies. A Cavalcanti who was a long-time supporter of the oligarchs and had also served as castellan to Brienne was included, as was a Della Tosa who had been a member of the oligarchical *balia* of Eight in July of 1340. One could also cite a Gianfigliazzi, a Medici, a Rossi, and a Tornaquinci whose political odyssey was almost identical. Of the Fourteen, at least twelve were members of the old guard

[95] Stefani, rub. 588. The effect of this disastrous collaboration between magnates and *popolani grassi* was to cause the latter to conclude that "S'io arò per compagnia uno artifice, egli mi sara suggetto, o reverente e farà quello vorrò ed ancora non lo arò per metà, chè se non farà quello vorrò, non saranno tanti, chè mi rompano in mano la faccenda" (*ibid.*). Cf. also G. Villani, XII, 18–19.

who had promoted Brienne to lordship only to jettison him eleven months later.[96]

The aristocratic Fourteen and the Six were nothing but old sheep (or wolves, depending upon the reader's moral suasions) dressed in not very different clothing. Only a few months before these self-same men had staffed and supported The Twenty to no avail. Moreover, their efforts to seek relief from public tragedy and private misfortune through the energetic expedient of despotism proved just as ill-starred. Now they sought to found a regimen perhaps not unfairly characterized as a variety of antigovernment. Little had been learned from past political experience, for these oligarchs still believed that the polis might be governed in late Merovingian style.

The ambition of these magnates and *popolani* was to undermine the active constraints of law. They could render bothersome tribunals ineffectual, and the treasury records stand as a tribute to their success. There were only a handful of convictions—for the bearing of arms, remaining on streets after curfew, creating fire hazards, littering, storing inflammable materials in the piazzas. There were no fines recorded for violations of the "good customs of the commune": offenses such as breaches of the sumptuary laws or practicing prostitution outside of the prescribed sections of the city or failing to close one's shop on a holy day went unpunished. Much more serious, however, was the fact that there were few condemnations for such chronic offenses as assault and battery. The bedrock and capstone of the Florentine legal system, the Ordinances of Justice requiring that lawless magnates and their clans post security for continued good behavior, also stood abrogated. Nor were stiffer fines and penalties exacted from magnates than from commoners. Again the breach between public and private morality widened into a chasm.[97]

[96] Of course Taddeo Antella was a member of that great business family to whom Brienne granted a moratorium upon payment of debts. For the diplomatic posts held by Francesco Brunelleschi as the Duke's ambassador to Volterra as well as to the Romagna, see *CCE,* I bis, fols. 200–8r (Dec. 31, 1342). On the composition of this magistracy of Six, see *I Capitoli del Comune di Firenze,* ed. C. Guasti (Florence: 1893), vol. II, 57.

[97] On the membership of the Fourteen, see *DP,* IV, f. 1 (Aug. 2, 1343). Judging by his limited participation in the important decisions of the councils of the republic and the various *balie,* Filippo Duccio Magolotti had been little active in the crucial affairs of the commune. Many years ago (in 1315), either he or his father (the names were identical) had opposed the signory of King Robert of Naples over Florence. Cf. *LF,* XVI, Part 1, f. 17; Part 2, f. 30; XVII, f. 14. Francesco Medici had been neither overly active in the councils nor collaborated with the Duke. Villani mentions the Medici as leaders of the popular revolt against the aristocratic regime in late September of 1343. Francesco continued to serve the popular regime in the critical post of ambassador. Cf. *LF,* 16, I, f. 9; XVIII, f. 18; G. Villani, XII, 20; *CCE,* IX, f. 40 (Nov. 10, 1344).

In one area alone did the regime demonstrate a passion for activism: it undertook a redistricting of the city to reduce still further the minimal burden of taxation borne by the patriciate. In response to opposition against this measure, which in time of crisis would only undermine the already weakened fiscal position of the *camera,* the magnates in the Santo Spirito section threatened to cut the bridges across the Arno and establish an independent political community. The diarist Donato Velluti, a magistrate of the commission holding hearings on this bill, intimates that this threat was not taken lightly, and the measure was passed.[98]

This most aristocratic of all Florentine communal governments displayed an almost pathological desire to please the upper echelons of society. Former oligarchical regimes had occasionally been willing to challenge the communal councils on the issue of raising revenue. Few were so irresponsible as to reduce the tax burden at so critical a moment. Moreover, with half the representation accorded to magnates, this government was reluctant to submit even the most modest fiscal proposal to the councils. Although it blithely ordered that communal creditors be reimbursed and public debts promptly paid, it provided not a single clue as to the source of monies either to make interest payments or to amortize the burgeoning public debt. There is no record of any proposal entertained by this most patrician of all *trecento* governments to alleviate the deteriorating fisc. There was every reason for alarm: at no time in recent communal history had so little revenue entered the *camera.* The only tax exacted with regularity was the regressive gabelle on the retail sale of foodstuffs—which fell most heavily upon the very poor. The customs toll dropped to a new low, and the gabelle on contracts showed an even more marked decline.[99]

This last oligarchical regimen was a species of antigovernment in that it gratified laissez-faire aspirations of the patriciate under the elegant canopy of easy legality. Magnates and *popolani grassi* formed a coalition to give final and unequivocal form to the anarchical sentiments intoned with such intensity by the communal councils of the 1330's. They scored a triumph: the do-nothing signory had given almost perfect form to the permissive communal paideia.

That the rulers were selected from law-abiding citizenry, as Villani maintained, was meaningless, since the law they abided by was that of

[98] *Cronica,* pp. 164–65; N. Rodolico, *Il popolo minuto,* p. 45; *I Capitoli del Comune,* II, 57.
[99] The pertinent documents are to be found in *CCE,* II (Aug.–Sept. 1343).

patrician dispensation from obligation, scarcely suitable for times of collective crisis and individual despair. Nor did Stefani's comment—that the failure of the regime was a consequence of the deception of the *popolani grassi* by their magnate confreres—hold water, for they had served together for many years on the *balie* of the 1330's and on The Twenty. The tragedy was rather that after a long succession of unremitting disasters they fell back on the easy conclusion that the permissive paideia was still possible. So viable did it seem to them that they were tempted to extend it to its logical limits and permit the commune to wither away, the patriciate to become virtual dictators, the machinery designed to exact aristocratic sacrifice and compliance to be destroyed.

# POPULAR GOVERNMENT AND THE BEGINNINGS OF THE STERN PAIDEIA, 1343–1348*

# V

Late in July of 1343 the Florentines had acted in concert to end the despotism of Walter of Brienne. The patrician signory that was formed to undertake the rule of the city proved as unpopular as the regime that preceded it. In late September it, too, was overthrown and a new government installed—the most democratic Florence had ever known. For example, it conferred sizable representation on men from new families who were matriculated in both the greater and lesser guilds of the city. These *novi cives* had filtered into politics before, but never en masse as they did in the fall of 1343. For the first time in communal history half of those who held high office were parvenus, i.e., from families that had never sat in the signory. They were characterized as brazen upstarts by the chroniclers and literary men of the period and judged incapable of governing themselves let alone ruling others.[1]

Florentine historians of the 1340's were unanimous in this verdict, and when the most esteemed of their number, Giovanni Villani, attributed the ruin of the commune to the political ineptitude of the new men he was merely giving voice to this opinion.[2] By the 1350's, however, this melancholy consensus had broken down, and when Matteo Villani re-

*This chapter is an expanded version of my article "Florentine Popular Government (1343–1348)," published in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, CVI (1962), 360–82.

[1] For the background of the *novi cives* see J. Plesner, *op. cit.*, pp. 119 ff. Between 1343 and 1348 approximately half the 270 members of the priorate were from families that had never sat in the priorate before. Moreover, the *prestanze* and *estimi* of the *novi cives* stood at the very high ratio of five to six and one-half, in comparison to those imposed upon members of the patriciate. In addition, approximately half the new men were matriculated in the major guilds while the remainder were members of the *arti minori*. G. Brucker and M. Becker, "The *Arti Minori* in Florentine Politics," *Mediaeval Studies*, XVIII (1956), 96–101.

[2] G. Villani, *Cronica*, XII, 43, 72; G. Boccaccio, *Lettere volgari* (Florence: 1834), p. 12. For Matteo Villani's views, see G. Brucker, "The Ghibelline Trial of Matteo Villani," *Medievalia et Humanistica*, XIII (1960), 52–53.

corded the significant events of Florentine history he frequently cast the *novi cives* in a heroic role and viewed the patriciate, the Guelf party, and the high Tuscan ecclesiastics as deadly threats to good government. This altered interpretation pervaded the writings of Florentine humanists of the late *trecento* and found its clearest expression in the letters of the most eminent classical scholar of his age, Coluccio Salutati, who spoke of Florence as governed by an aristocracy of deeds—the merchants and artisans—rather than by an aristocracy of birth—the *milites*.[3]

The regime founded in the autumn of 1343 deserves to be studied in some detail. Perhaps an examination of the policies initiated by this signory will enable us to understand better the change in attitude. At critical moments throughout Florentine history certain of the patriciate had recognized their compatibility of interests with the newcomers, based upon common guild affiliations, mutual ownership of property, similarity of patrimonial endowment, and joint business ventures. This bond was further reinforced through intermarriage and membership in such social and religious organizations as the tower societies and confraternities. Moreover, the new men who acquired Florentine citizenship came from the wealthiest and most influential classes of the *contado*. Patterns of migration reveal that this stratum was the first to leave the countryside for the city and were soon followed by families only a little less prosperous. This trend persisted until the middle years of the fourteenth century; the effect was to leave the cultivation of the land to the poorest elements. The signory designed communal legislation to dissuade serfs and agricultural laborers from abandoning their traditional calling and used the power of the courts to prevent them from severing their legal ties with rural Tuscany.[4] The results of a recent study of the countryside support the conclusion that in territories under Florentine jurisdiction, the phrase "Stadtluft macht frei" (Town air makes one free) had little meaning.[5] The new citizens of Florence were not the fugitive slaves and miserable serfs described by historians of a generation ago such as Davidsohn, Pardi, and Caggese, but rather scions of affluent country families who could well afford to purchase real estate and erect a dwelling in the city, pay urban

[3] E. Garin, "I cancellieri umanisti della Repubblica Fiorentina," *Rivista Storica Italiana,* LXXI (1959), 194–95.
[4] E. Fiumi, "Fioritura e decadenza dell'economia fiorentina," *op. cit.,* 484–87; P. Santini, *Documenti dell'antica costituzione del comune i Firenze* (Florence: 1895). pp. 51, 391.
[5] J. Plesner, *op. cit.,* p. 119; N. Ottokar, *Il comune di Firenze,* pp. 123 ff.

imposts over a period of five to ten years, and still have sufficient capital to matriculate in one of the Florentine guilds and open up shop.[6]

In many instances, before the new men could be transformed into *veri, antiqui et originari cives,* they had to be sponsored by prominent Florentines who were willing to go surety for them and vouch for their continued good behavior.[7] On other occasions the new men were required to post a sizable bond.[8] They also had to demonstrate that they were true *amatores* of the city and men with deep commitments to Florentine Guelfism.[9] Since the atmosphere of the medieval city-state was intimate and personal, the origins, ancestry, backgrounds, allegiances, and opinions of those who petitioned for citizenship were well known to the signory, and when the communal councils voted on requests this information became a part of public record. Men who had served the republic well on the battlefield established particularly strong claims on Florence's affection, which paved the way to citizenship, and conversely those whose loyalties were suspect were confronted with formidable obstacles. The guardians of political orthodoxy in Florence—the *Parte Guelfa*—kept detailed dossiers on the juridical status, regional ties, and political reliability of would-be citizens and their families. Since the captains of the *Parte* and other advisory panels played an important role in the selection of new citizens, the reputation of the aspirant came under careful scrutiny. When a truly prominent applicant petitioned, eminent members of these bodies would speak reassuringly about his qualifications.[10]

Entrenched older families were willing to allow the *novi cives* representation in the signory provided the overwhelming preponderance of power remained in their hands. Since the majority of newcomers were enrolled in the minor guilds, the tendency for almost half a century had been to restrict the number of seats open to the *minori* in such critical offices as the priorate, the colleges, and the communal treasury. In 1343, however, a more serious and sustained challenge was launched against

[6] See Plesner's telling critique of these older interpretations in *op. cit.*, pp. 116–22.

[7] *LF,* XXXVII, fols. 76r–82 (June 21, 1356, to July 8, 1356); *P,* XLIII, f. 165 (Oct. 17, 1356); *ibid.,* LI, f. 8r; *LF,* XXXVII, f. 56 (Aug. 21, 1363). On occasion, as many as eighty-four Florentines acted as *fideiussores* for the *novo homo.*

[8] *P,* XLV, f. 105r (Dec. 12, 1357). The amount averaged 200 lire. There is one instance in which the new citizen agreed to make a loan of 500 florins to Florence and was immediately declared eligible for office. Cf. *P,* XLVII, f. 98 (Dec. 23, 1359).

[9] *Ibid.,* XLV, f. 86r (Oct. 23, 1357); f. 105r (Dec. 12, 1357).

[10] Conversely, the chances of the petitioner were jeopardized if an influential Florentine such as a Rossi, Tornaquinci, or Strozzi spoke against him in the communal council halls. Cf. *LF,* XXXIV, f. 118r; XXXV, f. 10; XXXIX, f. 211r.

this system of apportionment when the new men from the major guilds joined the *minori* and succeeded in winning greater representation. A rash of bankruptcies, an empty communal treasury, and a series of disastrous experiments, first with The Twenty and then with despotism, discredited the patriciate and made it difficult for them to resist the demands of the new men.[11]

In the past the *novi cives* had pressed hard for a voice in the signory; they won ephemeral victories in 1293, 1323, and 1328. In part their dissatisfaction with the *status quo* and their persistence stemmed from the political backgrounds of these affluent immigrants. Before they settled in the city this group had long dominated the social, economic, and political life of their native rural parishes.[12] They had exercised great influence over the local assemblies and established their right to participate in the election of officials empowered to dispense justice and levy taxes. They themselves served as consuls, rectors, and syndics and regularly represented their constituents before the Florentine courts. It was during these sessions that vital issues concerning the recruitment of military forces, the responsibility of the *popolo* for maintaining roads, bridges, and fortifications, and methods for raising communal revenue were debated. The men of the *popoli, castelli,* and rural communes zealously guarded their hard-won prerogatives against all who sought to dispute them. They contended against feudal lords and church dignitaries on questions of liability for corvees, ownership of lands, payment of rents, and the right to elect functionaries. They petitioned the signory for prorogation of levies, challenged communal claims that they were responsible for the crimes committed by exiles and criminals in their quarter of the *contado,* and requested reductions in tax assessments.[13]

The new citizens were, then, accustomed to exercising political power in the *contado* and, upon arrival in the city were not without expectancies in this area. They had much to offer the republic beyond their varied

[11] *Tratte,* 1155, contains the names of all bankrupts from the letter "A" through "S," and was used for the purpose of barring the *falliti* from communal office. The *Atti del Podestà* and the *Camera del Comune, Entrata,* contain additional names and bring the total to 300. The former is a particularly valuable source, never before studied for the abundant materials on bankruptcies.

[12] J. Plesner, *op. cit.,* pp. 63 ff; *Archivio Notarile,* A. 981–83. During the middle years of the fourteenth century many of the new men had sufficient capital to undertake the profitable and vital role of farming communal taxes. Cf. especially *CCE,* LVIII, f. 134; LIX, f. 60; CLXXII, unnumbered folios; *Scrivano,* III, unnumbered folios. It should be added that less than 5 per cent of those communal office holders whose descent can be traced had immediate ancestors who were agricultural laborers.

[13] *CCE,* 1 bis, *passim.*

experience on the level of everyday politics, for prominent among their number were many from the learned professions. The lawyers and notaries, who were particularly conspicuous in their ranks, brought a theoretical knowledge of techniques of administration and political procedures. As the functions of communal government became more diverse and complex, legal training became more indispensable to the republic.[14] Throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries the signory's responsibilities mounted as Florence extended her rule over Tuscany, with the consequence that bureaucracy proliferated. Few members of the patriciate were willing to undertake careers in a civil service that was both underpaid and held in disrepute.[15] Therefore, we find the *novi cives* coming to occupy a variety of critical administrative posts, especially in the middle years of the *trecento;* at the same time they were denied entry into the more prestigious offices of the commune, guild courts, and *Parte Guelfa.*

## I

The Florentine chroniclers and men of letters at first heaped abuse and invective upon the *novi cives* because they were without lineage, renown, or manners; yet they were willing to acknowledge their right, at least in theory, to hold office.[16] We have already observed this ambivalence in the writings of the most important *trecento* Florentine chronicler—Giovanni Villani. On the one hand he had stoutly maintained that a "buono reggimento" should extend representation to all citizens matriculated in

[14] Sixty-five per cent of all notaries who held communal office between 1343 and 1382 came from families recently migrated to the city. While their numbers increased in the rapidly growing civil service, their representation in the signory declined by one-half. This statement is based upon a comparison of the number of seats held from 1328 to 1342 with those occupied from 1343 to 1348. The holdings of this group in the funded communal debt (*Monte*) averaged the considerable sum of 200 florins.

[15] Notable exceptions to this statement are to be found in every distinguished Florentine family. Those who entered this type of career, however, were frequently the least affluent. For the names of these men, see *CCE,* Vols. III–XXX. All employees of the commune were required to pay a tax on their salaries, and therefore their names are recorded in the *camera.*

[16] By the late 1330's the idea of *Buon Governo* for the Tuscan communes involved, as we have seen, a commitment to the belief that representation should be extended to the *grandi, mezzani,* and *minori.* Discussions held before the Florentine signory indicate that this Aristotelian ideology was grounded on very practical considerations, for this was the only way that the city could be preserved in *statu pacis* and *scandala* be avoided. Therefore even later, when a polis was *in statu popularis,* some representation had to be accorded the nobles so that there might be concord and unity. For a general treatment of the artistic implications of this theme see N. Rubinstein, "Political Ideas in Sienese Art," *op. cit.,* 180–86.

the guilds, while on the other he launched his bitterest attacks against the regime of 1343–48, the most democratic in communal history, because it was dominated by the new men—"artisans, manual laborers, and idiots . . . who cared little for the republic and knew less about governing it."[17] In Giovanni's opinion the *novi cives* were arrogant parvenus devoid of civic spirit whose presence constituted a menace to the proper conduct of statecraft—and yet an essential ingredient in the government. The constitution of October, 1343, which granted the *novi cives* 50 per cent of all seats in the signory, was theoretically an "ordine assai comune e buono," but it broke down when put into practice.[18]

Giovanni's position was far removed from Dante's or Boccaccio's: although they championed the right of the *novi cives* to participate in the culture of an urban patriciate and believed in their educability, both writers blamed these "upstart people" for lowering the tone of civic morality. Both longed for a return to the golden days of just government when a homogeneous ruling class was not threatened by discordant elements.[19] Dante lamented that "the citizenship" was being contaminated by the new rustics from Campi, from Fighini, and from Certaldo, who were responsible for the malignant growth of factionalism in Florence.[20] Recently arrived from such ludicrously named places as Capalle, Cilicciavole, Sugame, and Viminiccio, and having only yesterday laid aside the trowel and plough, they were, in the judgment of Boccaccio, the agents of the city's undoing: "Their minds are filled with insatiable avarice and overweening pride, so that, seeking not the public welfare but their own, they have brought misery to the city and now seek to enslave it."[21]

Why is it that Giovanni Villani, who shared the prejudices of Dante and Boccaccio, took such pains to defend the right of the *novi cives* to hold communal office? Although the poets would have acknowledged the imperatives of cultural democracy and served them by popularizing chivalry, scholasticism, and Aristotelianism, they would never have found the political interests of the *novi cives* commensurate with *buon governo*. The

[17] G. Villani, XI, 118; XII, 43.
[18] *Ibid.*, XII, 72.
[19] C. T. Davis, *op. cit.*, pp. 97 ff. The destruction of civic virtue at the hands of the immigrants is one of the persistent theses of thirteenth-century Florentine historiography. Cf. N. Rubinstein, "The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence," *op. cit.*, 220–25.
[20] *Paradiso* XVI, 46–68; *Epistola* XI; G. Boccaccio, *Genealogiae deorum*, IV, 31.
[21] H. Baron, "The Social Background of Political Liberty in the Early Italian Renaissance," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, II (1960), 443; G. Boccaccio, *Lettere volgari* (Florence: 1834), p. 12.

earlier paideia as formulated by Latini, for example, was truly hopeful and stressed the nobility of deeds rather than birth, but it never envisioned a polis in which the newer elements would play anything more than a nugatory political role. Unlike his literary predecessors, however, Villani possessed insights of a slightly different character: less guarded and therefore more vulnerable to painful political experiences.

He saw in the events of the early forties the failure of all the regent orders. Since the older patriciate had betrayed the polis to the despot Brienne, those elements of the populace who love *libertà* must combat the "grandi e potenti cittadini" who either invited despotism or sought to establish a tyranny of their own. The arrogant *novi cives* posed a threat to the sound conduct of communal foreign policy, but had they not checked both the despotism of Brienne and the aristocratic tyranny of the magnates in September of 1343? The thirties and the early forties demonstrated clearly to Giovanni the dangers implicit in patrician domination and revealed the positive value of according representation to the *novi cives*. Many had been critical of the outrageous behavior of the aristocracy; Dante himself let the North winds of his personality loose against them. High lineage was denigrated, and Aristotle's theory of a mixed constitution was widely diffused throughout the city, but Giovanni Villani was the first chronicler to move from rhetoric and philosophy to *Realpolitik* when he came to underscore the civic contributions the *novi cives* might make to the well-being of the republic.

The later books of Giovanni's chronicle reveal three facets of his political development. Prompted by the outcome of patriciate efforts to install a dictator, he tends first towards political nihilism. Then he indulges in prideful celebration of the overthrow of both dictator and aristocratic regime in 1343 by the virtuous *popolo*. Lastly and most significant, he reverts to a position between the old paideia and the new civic idealism.

In choosing this last the chronicler mediated between the old and the new; as a consequence his position has become more precarious and more vulnerable. He had neither the security of the past nor the hope for the future. He had extended the potential for virtue from culture to politics but could not subscribe whole-heartedly to a paideia that recognized large-scale participation of *novi cives* in the life of the polis. He was tormented by the disregard for government by consensus achieved through admonition and persuasion. When laissez-faire, easy rule succumbed to the stern paideia of coercion and law, he was baffled and anguished. After

1343 the popular signory enforced public law against all groups, privileged and unprivileged. The Tuscan church and the magnates felt the full impact of the revivified statutes. The chronicler reacted by decrying these measures and claimed that the new men were insensitive to the sacred values that gave the medieval polis its transcendental glow. Although he defended neither the church nor the magnates—and even acknowledged the legal grounds for public reprisal—he considered it necessary to remember the Guelf ties between Florence and the papacy and the many civic virtues of the punished magnates, whose ancestors had bled and died for the polis.[22]

Matteo Villani, continuator of his brother's chronicle, echoed these same sentiments when he deplored the overweening political ambitions of the newcomers, whom he considered prone to immoderation, and yet rejoiced that it was a coalition of the greater guildsmen and new citizens who frustrated the efforts of the aristocrats to establish absolute dominion over the signory. He agreed with the Boccaccio of the mid-1350's that the new men were vulgar and lacked "liberal studies," were self-seeking and intemperate, and without the virtues of the *antichi moderati* who had governed the city so wisely in the distant past. But he parted company with the poet in lavishing praise upon those merchants, artisans, and men of middling status who resolutely and courageously opposed the craven policies of the *grandi* and *potenti* and in so doing saved the republic. Gradually Matteo came to embrace the sterner paideia and consider the real enemies of Florence the very spokesmen of the multiple medieval political universe—the Church, the *Parte Guelfa,* and the great feudatories. His role as official over the funded communal debt, as well as his persecution at the hands of the unyielding aristocrats of the Guelf captaincy, increased his appreciation of the wisdom of strict enforcement of public law. It was precisely those who most menaced Florence who tended to exist outside of the purview of the law.[23]

The leading chroniclers of the second half of the fourteenth century

[22] G. Villani, *Cronica* XII, 43–44. It was, says the chronicler, "una aspra e crudele legge," enacted against the church by the then "signori" of the city who were "artifici e gente manovoli e idioti." He describes the law pertaining to the magnates as "contra ogni debito di ragione." Cf. also XII, 108, on their exclusion from an important embassy. On the Guelf ties of the polis see XII, 109. On the tendency to identify the *novi cives* as "Ghibellines and traitors" see, G. Brucker, *Florentine Politics and Society,* pp. 119–120.

[23] M. Villani, *Cronica,* VIII, 24. The chronicler tells us that certain facts are now apparent which were not so when he began his history: Those who menace the city and threaten "sua libertà" are the *grandi,* papal legates, high clergy, and those who would betray the city in hopes of winning ecclesiastical benefices. Cf. *ibid.,* VIII, 103. G. Brucker, "The Ghibelline Trial of Matteo Villani," *op. cit.,* 51–53.

saw the prime threat to the traditional liberty of the city in very different terms than did Dante. To them it was not the people from the countryside who menaced Florentine *libertà* but rather the political machinations of the old families who dwelled within the city walls. Alarm over the *bestie fiesolane* was replaced by a pervasive fear that ancient clans such as the Albizzi would establish a tyranny. There was also deep-seated suspicion that these oligarchs would barter the city's cherished freedoms in return for private advantage and personal power,[24] and that their first step would be to dominate the signory by ousting the *novi cives* from office. Those who stand in opposition to these intrigues now find themselves in the unaccustomed position of defending the new men against their high-born adversaries. No longer were the *novi cives* charged with spreading the virus of factionalism throughout the city and undermining the "Roman inclination towards order and good government," but rather the Albizzi and other dreaded Florentine aristocrats were held responsible for the ills of the republic.[25]

With the exception of Antonio Panella, modern historians have neglected the politics of that first interval of popular government, when *novi cives* participation was at its maximum. And yet the first grand experiment in coalition government in which newcomer and patrician joined forces and talents took place between 1343 and the advent of the Black Death in 1348.[26] The fact that both chronicler and leading civic humanist accepted such a coalition suggests that it could hardly have been a failure,

[24] Marchionne di Coppo Stefani, *op. cit.*, rub. 720, 726; M. Villani, *Cronica,* VIII, 103. The fears expressed by the chroniclers are echoed by the advisers to the signory who urge that the government be wary of the action taken by its patrician ambassadors lest the city lose its "libertà" at the hands of secular rulers and ecclesiastical princes. Cf. *CP.,* I, unnumbered folio (Mar. 14, 1355). Spokesmen for the colleges admonished the government to restrain the Albizzi in order that they remain subject to the communal regime. Cf. *ibid.,* XII, f. 100 (Apr. 8, 1373). Similarly, they beseeched the priors to make certain that the captains submitted "to the will of the commune." *Ibid.,* fols. 8, 55r (Mar. 18, 1367).

[25] The captains of the *Parte* were accused in the council halls of fomenting suspicion among the citizenry, creating disunity, and acting in such a manner as to discredit the Guelf cause in Florence. Cf. *CP.,* II, f. 159r (Jan. 20, 1360); IV, fols. 101r-103 (Sept. 24, 1363).

[26] For a discussion of A. Panella's thesis on the ecclesiastical policies of the Florentine government from 1343 to 1348 see M. Becker, "Some Economic Implications of the Conflict between Church and State in Trecento Florence," *Mediaeval Studies,* XXI (1959), 2–5, A. Panella in his "Politica ecclesiastica del comune fiorentino," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* Part 2, IV (1913), 281–83, and the latest of Niccolo Rodolico's works, *I Ciompi* (Florence: 1945), pp. 53 ff., contend that the anticlericalism of the popular government stemmed from the participation of *il popolo minuto* in the formulation of governmental policy. This class did not have representation in the regime and therefore played no part in the enactment of any of the measures against the church.

but before the new paideia or the success of the political experiment can be assessed it is necessary to examine both the problems encountered by the popular signory and the policies formulated to overcome them.

## II

The most serious difficulty confronting the signory was the alarming deterioration of the republic's fiscal position. Evidence from the Florentine treasury records indicates that the twelve-month interval that preceded the inauguration of the new regime marked a nadir in communal finance.[27] Revenues from both direct and indirect levies had fallen sharply, and this general decline in fiscal strength was certainly a critical factor in bringing on the two revolutions that culminated with the founding of the new government. The republic was deeply in debt and could not honor her domestic and foreign commitments; short-term loans were no longer being amortized and the *camera* was unable to pay the salaries of her officials.[28] In August and early September of 1343 the treasury collected revenues from only a few of the state's many indirect taxes (gabelles); further, the judicial authority of the courts had collapsed, so that it was virtually impossible to enforce the law.[29]

A moratorium had been in effect on all governmental long-term loans for almost a year, and there appeared little likelihood that the signory would be able to resume interest payments on these *prestanze* for some time to come. Men who were willing to advance the treasury money on the basis of anticipated revenue had been in short supply for several years, and the announcement of a moratorium only worsened the situation.[30] Conditions had never seemed less hopeful, and public confidence in the capacity of the guild patriciate to lead the commune out of this economic wilderness was further shaken when many of the great Floren-

[27] As we have seen, returns from the most important gabelles had fallen by at least 50 per cent.

[28] The retainers of the signory petitioned for unpaid wages over a seven-month period. *PD,* IV, f. 7 (Sept. 4, 1343). See also the requests of Florentines who were serving as hostages in Verona for expense money owed them. *Ibid.,* f. 9r (Sept. 16, 1343). Among these hostages were members of leading families such as the Alamanni, Antella, Rossi, and Tornaquinci. For demands for reimbursement of short-term loans, see *ibid.,* f. 10.

[29] The only condemnations recorded in the *camera* were a handful of fines for gambling and roaming the city streets after curfew. The only source of revenue that produced generously at this time was the gabelle on pawnbrokers which increased over 100 per cent; this in itself is a pertinent comment on the state of the republic's economy at this time *CCE,* Vol. II.

[30] For repudiation of agreements with the government by tax farmers see *Balie,* II, fols. 38–104 (Dec. 8, 1342), to Mar. 6, 1343). Cf. also *ibid.,* fols. 29–30 (Nov. 20, 1342).

tine companies publicly acknowledged that they were unable to repay their creditors. Leading firms such as Acciaiuoli, Bardi, Frescobaldi, and Peruzzi had already compromised themselves through their close association with the tyrant Walter of Brienne, and other great houses had damaged their political prestige by championing foolish and costly military schemes for the capture of neighboring Lucca. Finally, in the summer of 1343, the hard-won Florentine empire began to disintegrate, and cities once under the proud republic's sway humiliated the Florentines by gaining their freedom. Arezzo, Castiglione, Colle, Pistoia, San Gimignano, and Volterra launched successful revolutions and caused Machiavelli, the lover of paradoxes, to observe: "Thus Florence found herself deprived of both her tyrant and her dominions at the same moment, and in recovering her liberty, taught her subjects how they might become free."[31]

The success of the popular signory depended upon a recovery of state finances, for without an increase in revenues the city could not hope to carry out even the most elemental tasks of government or to win back even a small measure of public confidence. The condition of private finance was intimately bound to that of the public treasury since so many of the greater guildsmen were among the commune's principal creditors. These men could remain solvent only if the *camera* honored her commitments. As we have noted, since 1315 the chief source of revenue at the disposal of the *camera* had been the yield from indirect taxation. Communal councils had always been adamant in their opposition to direct levies upon urban real estate and capital, and it is doubtful whether the signory could have won over the necessary two-thirds majority required by law to enact this dreaded form of taxation in the autumn of 1343. Since Florentines associated the *estimo* with the most repressive policies of the late unlamented despot, Walter of Brienne, the well-being of the commune had to depend upon the monies from indirect imposts.

Although considerable data have been collected on the private sector of the Florentine economy, fluctuations in communal finance have been overlooked. It would be a serious mistake to attempt to transpose the results of the recent researches of the Italian economic historian Armando Sapori in the field of business history to the area of state finance, since the latter underwent a very different metamorphosis. Surprisingly enough, during the interval 1343 to 1348, when so many of the great Florentine companies were declared bankrupt, sweeping advances were taking place

[31] N. Machiavelli, *History of Florence and of the Affairs of Italy* (New York: 1960), p. 101.

in the condition of the communal fisc.[32] We have had occasion to consider the extensive statistics on state revenues presented by Giovanni Villani for the prosperous years 1336 to 1338, and modern scholarship has confirmed the reliability of his figures.[33] Perhaps if we compare these statistics with new data for the post–1343 period, we will arrive at a more meaningful appreciation of the recuperative power of the public economy under the aegis of popular government.

As we have noted, the republic's single most important tax—a duty on imports and exports passing through the city gates—brought in 90,200 florins a year. By 1343 this *gabella portarum* had fallen to 68,000 florins, only to rise two years later to 75,000 florins; just before the onslaught of the Black Death it totaled 79,000 florins.[34] The second most lucrative tax was the impost upon the sale of wine within the city walls and the *contado.* It averaged 58,000 florins for the years 1336 to 1338 but declined to 36,000 florins in 1342; however, it was returning 44,000 florins to the treasury, and just prior to the Black Death it brought in 45,000 florins.[35] The revenue from the gabelle on contracts shows a similar fluctuation during these years; yielding 20,000 florins annually between 1336 and 1338, it fell to 7,322 florins in 1342. It then rose to 17,137 florins in 1344 and within three years it had almost recovered its original value when it totaled 18,500 florins.[36] The gabelle on salt averaged 14,450 florins in the interval 1336 to 1338. In 1342 it dropped to 4,697 florins but by autumn of 1343 was up to 10,033⅓ florins and remained constant for the next three years; by 1346–1347 it reached 14,000 florins, close to its earlier high.[37] The communal levy on pawnbrokers was 3,000 florins a year for the interval described by Giovanni Villani. In March of 1343 it brought in only 1,950 florins but by 1346 had climbed to 2,800 florins.[38] The tax on cattle slaughtered in the *contado* averaged 4,400 florins per year between 1336 and 1338; this sum was reduced substantially as a result of political pressures exerted by the influential butchers' guild and

[32] Cf. especially A. Sapori, *La crisi delle compagnie,* pp. 146 ff.

[33] A. Sapori, "L' attendibilità di alcune testimonianze cronistiche dell'economia medievale," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* LXXXVI (1929), 19–30.

[34] G. Villani, XI, 92; *CCE,* V, f. 18; VI, f. 47; VII, f. 115; VIII, fols. 4–5, 16r, 18; XII, f. 43; XIV, f. 18; XVIII, f. 102; XXV, f. 104r.

[35] *Ibid.,* IX, f. 39r; X, f. 84; XI, f. 33r; XXV, f. 104r.

[36] *Ibid.,* X, f. 108r; XI, f. 34; XIV, f. 18; XVII, f. 6. For a discussion of this type of tax, see B. Barbadoro, *Le finanze della repubblica fiorentina* (Florence: 1929), pp. 536–43.

[37] *CCE,* VI, f. 45r; IX, f. 59r; XIV, f. 77r.

[38] *Ibid.,* XII, f. 3; XXIV, f. 47. For the brief ascent of this gabelle during the late summer of 1343, see footnote 29.

in 1344 yielded only 1,475 florins; like all of the other gabelles, however, its yield increased until it was bringing in 1,650 florins by the year 1347.

Comparable gains were registered by other communal levies between 1343 and 1348; for example, returns on the imposts on cattle markets in Florence and in the parish of San Giovanni, outside the city, tripled during these years, and the gabelle on the hawkers of foodstuffs increased ten times during the same period.[39]

This startling recovery can be attributed in part to the many administrative reforms inaugurated by the popular signory during its tenure. The collection of indirect taxes was systematized, for example, and severe punishments were meted out to lax and corrupt officials of the earlier regimes.[40] Despite the trend towards impartial and impersonal enforcement of communal law, it cannot account entirely for the resurgence of public revenues. It would appear that the principal factor inducing this recovery was the durability of the complex Florentine economic system, which could sustain a series of severe jolts and still reassert itself vigorously. Such a rally could have occurred under any type of regime, but the way in which the popular signory nurtured and husbanded this recovery is significant. By making certain fundamental decisions, the signory was able to relieve the economy of crushing burdens.

In November of 1342, you will recall, Walter of Brienne had enacted a decree suspending payment of interest to communal creditors. Theoretically, at least, income from these levies might revert to the communal treasury and be disbursed to meet mounting obligations. In November the treasury balance stood at only 15,138 florins, barely sufficient to meet the day-to-day exigencies of government.[41] Unfortunately, treasury receipts were employed in ever-greater profusion for the hire of troops and the payment of communal functionaries. In fact, despite the moratorium, the *estimo,* and a variety of other measures, the public debt increased. New forced loans exacted by the despot as well as by the patrician regime that succeeded him were added to the augmented total. Meanwhile, almost

[39] *Ibid.,* XII, f. 41r; XI, f. 34; XXIII, f. 26; X, f. 107; XVI, f. 102r; X, f. 9.

[40] The authority of the judicial officials over gabelles was extended and special officers were appointed to reduce expenses. Among those selected were two *novi cives,* a dyer and a swordmaker. *P,* XXXII, f. 59. Unpaid gabelles were collected and suits initiated against those deemed delinquent. *CCE,* Vols. XVI–XVIII. In the past, of course, dispensation had been granted by court and communal council for failure to pay gabelles. This was a regular feature of oligarchical rule (1328–42). Cf. *GA,* CXXII, Parts 2 and 3. M. Becker, "Some Aspects of Oligarchical, Dictatorial and Popular *Signorie* in Florence," *op. cit.,* 425–34.

[41] *CCE,* II bis, f. 7.

as soon as they were received, returns from imposts were dispensed by the *camera* to mercenaries. Unless the popular government could devise a series of remedies, it would be necessary for communal creditors to relinquish both the principal and the interest on their loans. An increase in returns from indirect levies would not alleviate mounting pressure if it were not coupled with sizable reductions in the communal budget, for it would be consumed by rising government expenditures.

Both the *novi cives* and the patriciate who sat in the signory after 1343 were holders of government securities, and indeed the Florentine state can be likened to a giant corporation in which the 8,000 most affluent men in the community were the principal shareholders. The program initiated by the newer shareholders not only saved the equity of their social superiors but also demonstrated their prudence in fiscal matters to the more experienced patriciate. When the new signory renounced traditional Florentine imperialism in favor of a policy of disengagement and isolation, it was moving toward reconstituting a solvent fisc. The popular signory acted to curtail military expenditures after 1343; so successful was this policy that by 1345 the military budget had been halved and the republic spending only 75,000 florins a year for this purpose.[42] Florence was indeed fortunate at this time not to be menaced by any adversaries of stature. No neighboring state had either the leadership or energy to resume the terrible contest over Tuscany. Thus, except for marauding companies there was no sustained threat to Florentine *libertà* in the years just before the Black Death.

The popular regime was eager to avoid foreign entanglements that might involve her in the disputes of other states and happy to renounce territorial ambitions that might incur the enmity of her neighbors. This task was made easier since Florence did not have to contend during these years with meddling German emperors and popes bent on the reconquest of the Patrimony. There were obstacles, however, the gravest of which was the republic's own Guelf legacy. The patrician elite of Giovanni Villani's generation, who guided the city's most aristocratic club—the pro-papal *Parte Guelfa*—had strong allegiances to the Guelf alliance system, which in the past had contributed so much to the glory, strength, and prosperity of the city. Throughout the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries, banking tycoons, industrialists, and great merchants had received many concessions from the papacy and the rulers of south Italy. As early as 1340, however, leading Florentines were convinced that the numerous

[42] This figure is based upon a comparison of the statistics presented by Giovanni Villani and those found in the *Camera del Comune, Entrata e Uscita.*

liabilities incurred through ties with Avignon and Naples far outweighed the commercial advantages, since the republic was compelled to lay out huge sums for the support of the ambitious military plans of her allies. The Bardi and Frescobaldi, two of the mightiest Florentine banking families, led an abortive revolt to reverse this policy and liberate Florence from her crushing commitment. What these leading families were unable to accomplish in 1340 was achieved three years later by the popular signory, which proved unresponsive to Guelf ties. The new government eliminated traditional subsidies and reduced her budget by curtailing her obligations abroad. Only in this manner could Florence save enough to make the *camera* solvent and avert communal bankruptcy.

During the 1330's over 70 per cent of high communal offices were held by members of Florence's three greatest guilds: the *Lana,* the *Cambio,* and the *Calimala.* These patricians advocated that the commune be financed through indirect taxes that fell on the consumer and forced loans at high rates of interest. The result was to increase the communal debt until it became a crushing burden. By summer of 1343 it had reached 800,000 florins—roughly equal to the total revenue of the commune over a period of almost three years.[43]

Even as early as 1340 it was evident to the signory that the republic could not hope to repay its creditors unless it made substantial innovations in communal fiscal policy. The councils were reluctant to permit the government to introduce needed reforms despite the fact that the situation was worsening daily. The efforts of the signory were clearly inadequate and had a negligible effect. Returns from gabelles still constituted the principal source of public revenue, and they were not entering the *camera* since long ago they had been pledged to amortize the *prestanze.* Walter of Brienne had looked for a solution to this dilemma by declaring a moratorium on the communal debt.

Although the new regime could look forward to increased returns from indirect taxation and substantial savings on the military budget, the problem of funding the communal debt remained formidable. Tax returns were not high enough to permit the treasury to amortize over a half-million florins. The money saved by curtailing military expenditures was just sufficient to pay the 75,000 florins a year in carrying charges. The signory began to work towards a solution to this problem in December

[43] The public debt was only 47,275 florins in 1303, but by 1338 it totaled approximately 450,000 florins. Cf. E. Fiumi, "Fioritura e decadenza dell'economia fiorentina," *op. cit.,* p. 455. Over the next four years it almost doubled, reaching the astronomical figure (for those times) of slightly more than 800,000 florins.

of 1343, and by 1345 they had consolidated all the outstanding old loans under a single orderly system. The varied items of public indebtedness were unified and lumped together in what the Florentines were to call the *Monte,* or "mountain."[44] By partially abandoning the redemptive feature of public finance, the signory freed the republic from the obligation of repaying over a half-million florins of principal. This was accomplished by declaring the public debt to be interest-bearing and stating that credits in the *Monte* were negotiable. Interest rates on the debt were cut to 5 per cent, a substantial reduction since most of the loans had been at rates from 10 to 15 per cent. The effect was to lower the carrying charges from 75,000 to approximately 25,000 florins a year.

This reform was made in the face of intense ecclesiastical opposition; clergy and laity alike were troubled by nagging doubts as to whether the funding of the republic's debt was contrary to the teachings of canon law on the subject of usury.[45] The Franciscans and Dominicans were divided on the baffling question, but the signory was unperturbed and continued to enact communal legislation that expressed deep confidence in the fundamental rightness of the *Monte.* And there were few Florentines who were too tormented to refuse to accept the proffered interest. After 1345 the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical courts over cases involving a charge of usury was severely limited, and it was difficult to prosecute those who had collected interest on an investment without risk. The popular regime abrogated clerical privilege with unprecedented zeal; the authority of the Holy Office was undermined, clergy were held liable for many communal levies, and secular courts established jurisdiction over matters that had been the exclusive preserve of ecclesiastical tribunals.

## III

The innovations made by the popular signory in church-state relations were closely related to government efforts to ameliorate the problems of the Florentine business community. The new men and the patricians who

[44] By taking this action the signory was able to scale the communal debt down to 505,044 florins. A reduction of over 300,000 florins in the public debt was not due solely to the founding of the *Monte,* but also to the fact that the popular signory had succeeded in amortizing certain of the *prestanze.* Cf. B. Barbadoro, *op. cit.,* 629–87; *CCE,* Vols. IV–XV.

[45] For the debate on the legitimacy of the *Monte,* see R. de Roover, "Il trattato di fra Santi Rucellai sul cambio, il monte comune e il monte delle doti," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* CXI (1953), 3–34.

held high office were extremely anxious about the welfare of the great companies. Together they acted to create an environment that would be congenial to hard-pressed Florentine bankers and industrialists. Although it is difficult to determine the extent to which the policies of the new regime contributed to the recovery of these harassed companies, there is little doubt that they did much to alleviate the impact of the economic crisis.

Sweeping legislation was enacted to protect companies from the insistent claims of creditors, lay and ecclesiastical. In 1345 and again a year later the captains of the twenty-one guilds submitted petitions aimed to prevent creditors from initiating suits for restitution in noncommunal courts.[46] These petitions became law and extended secular jurisdiction in clear violation of ecclesiastical liberties. Prelates and Neopolitan barons subsequently could bring suit only in Florentine courts, against the teetering companies, and these tribunals were notoriously slow to take action. Cases of this type could and did drag on interminably, giving companies precious time to liquidate assets. Since much of their wealth was in land, it could not be placed on the market *en bloc* without causing prices to plummet.

Prolonged litigation over bankruptcy procedures was also advantageous in that it gave the companies opportunity to transfer titles and conceal holdings. Delays and devious proceedings helped to make bankruptcies mere episodes in the history of many a great company in Florence. These houses were able to salvage much of their wealth and resumed leading roles in civic life.[47] In taking up the cudgel against the church courts, the captains of the twenty-one guilds, of whom the majority were new men, were acting with historical consistency. Whenever new men came into the signory in large numbers the tendency was to attack ecclesiastical jurisdiction and extend the authority of the commune.[48] In 1345–1346

[46] A. Panella, *op. cit.,* 327–65; G. Villani, *Cronica,* XI, 22. Stefani states that captains of the guilds were responsible for other important measures, including legislation against the "grandi" which were opposed unsuccessfully by the "buonomini" (rub. 607). Later, in the 1370's, when the twenty-one guilds were again very active in affairs of state, it was the "artes et populares" or the "artifices et mercatores" or the "artifices et populares" in whose name important legislation against the church or against the great families was to be presented. Cf. *CP,* XII, f. 13; *P,* LX, f. 143; LXIII, f. 70r.

[47] The Acciaiuoli, Bardi, Del Bene, Frescobaldi, Mozzi, and Peruzzi all suffered bankruptcy during the first half of the fourteenth century and yet were ubiquitous in Florentine politics during the latter part of the *trecento.* Cf. *CP,* Vols. I–X; *Estimo,* CCCLXXXVI, fols. 4 ff.; CCCXCI, fols. 12 ff.

[48] M. Becker, "Church and State in Florence on the Eve of the Renaissance (1343–1382)," *Speculum,* XXXVII (1962), 509–27.

the movement toward increasing state power was especially felicitous since it served the needs of a floundering mercantile patriciate. The popular government was proving itself a most sympathetic guardian of the interests of the great companies.

Any generalization about business conditions in Florence under the aegis of the popular government must remain tentative since few merchant account books for the period survive. In the two instances where we do have commercial records, however, the firms in question continued to make profits. The Albizzi company paid its partners a return of nearly 33 per cent on their investment, and Alberti fortunes continued to show appreciable improvement.[49] Both these firms soon entered the highest echelons of European finance and were great international houses by the second half of the *trecento*. Villani tells us that there was another order of businessmen who weathered the crisis of the 1340's—"the most recent capitalists." Chief among these was the house of Strozzi whose *ricordanze* show this aggressive family to have seized the opportunity to acquire real estate from hard-pressed companies during the years immediately preceding the Black Death. Like many other members of the Florentine business community, they realized substantial profits from these transactions. Shortly thereafter they entered the field of international finance, and by 1367 Carlo and Pazzino had formed a company with a total capitalization almost equal to that of the famous pre-1343 firms.[50] The Panciatichi, Petreboni, Rinuccini, and Uzzano were but a few of the many other families who rose to financial eminence during the middle years of the *trecento*. Few intervals in communal history display greater evidence of socioeconomic mobility, and this emergence of new families continued until the decade of the 1380's. Judging from the founding of new fortunes, decline did not set in until the late *trecento*.

The industry most vital to the Florentine economy and consequently the one that causes most controversy among economic historians was wool

[49] R. de Roover, "The Story of the Alberti Company of Florence, 1302–1348," *op. cit.*, 38–39; *I libri degli Alberti del Giudice,* ed. A. Sapori (Milan: 1952); A. Sapori, *Studi di storia economica,* pp. 975–1012. Neither the Bardi nor the Peruzzi made substantial business profits during the 1330's; the latter actually suffered a very serious decrease in capital. A Sapori, *La crisi delle compagnie mercantili,* p. 105; R. Davisohn, *Geschichte von Florenz,* IV, 208. For a record of the holdings of the Albizzi in the *Monte* of 1345 see *Monte* (1347), S. Giovanni, fols. 21, 964r.

[50] P. J. Jones, "Florentine Families and Florentine Diaries in the Fourteenth Century," *Papers of the British School at Rome,* XXIV (1956), 187–88. This company had a capital of 53,600 florins, just a bit less than the company of Giotto de' Peruzzi that was revived in 1331. Cf. A. Sapori, *La crisi,* p. 105.

manufacturing (the *Lana*).[51] During the 1330's the *Lana* was the rock on which Florentine prosperity was founded, since it offered employment to one-third of the city. Overexpansion and foreign competition in the early forties forced many leading firms to close down. Their problems were intensified with the outbreak of worker unrest in 1342. Confronted with a declining *Arte della Lana,* the popular government expended every energy toward the establishment of an economic environment that would be favorable to the interests of this guild. Despite the fact that many *lanaiuoli* were ineligible for communal office because they had been declared bankrupt, the guild succeeded in increasing its representation in the popular signory between 1343 and 1348.[52] From 1328 to 1343 members of the *Lana* held 25 per cent of the high posts in the republic; after 1343, however, this figure rose to 30.5 per cent. Yet the economic decline of the *Lana* did not affect the political prestige of this guild; moreover, the *novi cives* were anxious to assist the *lanaiuoli* in their recovery. The signory first annulled the many privileges bestowed upon the wool workers by their self-appointed benefactor, Walter of Brienne. Once again the day laborers employed by the *lanaiuoli* were placed under the jurisdiction of the guild courts and policed by an official elected by the guild masters.[53] The hand of the *Lana* was also much in evidence when the new government met to formulate monetary policy. In 1345 there was a dearth of silver coinage, which, according to Giovanni Villani, caused great discomfort to the *lanaiuoli.*[54] Therefore the signory and the communal councils passed legislation prohibiting the export of this precious metal from the city and *contado.* Two years later the government devaluated the silver currency. This step was urged by the *lanaiuoli* since they received payment for their cloth in gold and paid their employees in silver. The effect of this policy was to cause silver to depreciate and the gold florin to rise in value.

[51] R. Davidsohn, "Blüte und Niedergang der florentiner Tuchindustrie," *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Staatswissenschaft,* LXXXV (1928), 225–55; A. Doren, *Die Florentiner Wollentuchindustrie* (Stuttgart: 1901), pp. 412 ff. In his *Studi di storia economica* Armando Sapori presents a more cautious view of the alleged decline of the *Lana* in Florence. Cf. especially I, 544 ff.

[52] The average *Monte* holdings of the *lanaiuoli* who served in the popular government were 542 florins.

[53] Cf. M. Becker, "The Republican City-State in Florence: An Inquiry into its Origin and Survival (1280–1434)," *Speculum,* XXXV (1960), 46–48; *Atti del Capitano,* XVII, f. 72.

[54] G. Villani, *Cronica,* XII, 97; *Statuti,* XV, Bk. 3, f. 16r; G. Brucker and M. Becker, "The *Arti Minori* in Florentine Politics, 1342–1378," *op. cit.,* 98–99; R. de Roover, *op. cit.,* Vol. XVI; *Capitoli,* XVIII, fols. 93–94.

According to the statute of the *Podestà,* only the masters of the greater guilds were permitted to use the gold florin as the standard of value in business transactions and to keep their books in this monetary unit.

The *Lana* was not the only major guild to increase its representation during the era of popular government. The silk guild more than doubled its representation in the signory: from 1328 to 1342, 6.3 per cent of those elected to the priorate had matriculated in this *arte* and in the five years after 1343 the figure rose to 14.5 per cent. Like the *lanaiuoli,* these men were among the most affluent in urban society, with an average holding in the funded communal debt at the ample sum of 146 florins.[55] Particularly prominent among their number were the many *novi cives* who entered communal politics at this time. Families such as the Baldesi, the Bonaiuti, the Del Panchia, the Pantaleoni, and the Unganelli were to continue to play a crucial role in Florentine civic life over the next five decades. The phenomenal growth of silk manufacturing in Florence during the middle years of the *trecento* certainly contributed to the political mobility of Por Santa Maria members. As evidence of their growing economic importance, doublet makers and hosiers sat regularly in the communal councils. Soon they were joined by the master dyers and the soap manufacturers, whose skills were essential to the textile industry. Judging from the frequency with which the names of these men appear on the lists of priors after 1343, it is difficult to posit that the textile manufacturers suffered any appreciable decline in political influence.

The guilds who lost representation in the new government were the *Cambio* (bankers) and the *Calimala* (finishers of imported cloth). The men of the *Cambio* held 30 per cent of the posts in the signory from 1328 to 1342; after 1343 this figure fell to 15 per cent; *Calimala* representation declined from 16.25 per cent to 8.8 per cent. These statistics suggest that industries and professions more deeply rooted in the domestic economy, such as the *Lana* and the *Seta,* were less prone to sudden reversals in fortune than the *Cambio,* which was dependent upon the international money market. The *Calimala* had passed its peak and had lost dominance over the signory by the close of the *dugento.*

Fortunately, reliable population statistics exist for the period under consideration. Modern demographical studies have not substantially impaired the validity of the figures presented by Giovanni Villani in his *Cronica:* in 1338 there were 90,000 inhabitants living within the city

[55] On the rise of the silk industry at this time see P. Pieri, *Intorno alla storia dell'arte della seta in Firenze* (Bologna: 1927), pp. 117 ff.

walls; the number fell to 75,000 in the year 1340, only to rise again to 80,000 in early 1347.[56] This increment of 5,000 reversed the trend that had been in effect since 1300, when the city's population was 105,000, and suggests that during the five years before the Black Death there was definite urban growth for the first time in almost half a century. It is also interesting to note that there is a remarkable correlation between gate tolls and population figures. One can project the annual return from the *gabella portarum* so that its decline and rise coincides with the demographical curve. At its height, in 1338, it was 90,200 florins, averaging approximately 1 florin per inhabitant; it fell with the population and rose again, maintaining virtually the same ratio—79,000 florins in gate tolls for a population of 80,000.

Thus the yield from indirect taxation, and hence the economic recovery of the fisc, was closely tied to the gains Florence made in population during the years immediately preceding the Black Death. Correspondingly, the Florentine "depression" would occur between 1340 and 1342. In 1340 the population struck a new low, and in 1342, tax returns dropped. These data indicate that the interval after 1343 was in fact a period of adjustment and growth rather than protracted depression, as has been traditionally depicted.[57] A question that remains unanswered is that of the relationship between this partial recovery in revenue and population and the continuing political prestige of the Florentine textile industry. It can be suggested that increase in city population was to some extent related to the persistent needs of the *Lana* for manpower; the city fathers, who were well aware of this, requested that the masters of this guild put up money for the purchase of grain to take care of the destitute newcomers during the famine of 1346.[58]

[56] E. Fiumi, "La demografia fiorentina," *op. cit.*, 78–158. For a translation of the relevant chapter from Villani's chronicle, see R. Lopez and I. Raymond, *Medieval Trade in the Mediterranean World* (New York: 1955), pp. 71–74, and the bibliographical comments, p. 70, n. 85.

[57] For recent bibliography on this question see W. Ferguson, "Recent Trends in the Economic Historiography of the Renaissance," *Studies in the Renaissance*, VII (1960), 7–26. For a cautious description of general economic tendencies in *trecento* Europe, see R. Lopez, "The Trade of Medieval Europe: The South," in *The Cambridge Economic History of Europe*, II (Cambridge: 1952), 338–54. Y. Renouard in his *Recherches sur les compagnies commerciales et bancaires utilisées par les papes d'Avignon avant le Grand Schisme* (Paris: 1942) depicts the middle years of the *trecento* as being a time of unmitigated economic decline for Florence and does not see a substantial recovery until the 1360's.

[58] *Lana*, XLI, f. 203 (Sept. 13, 1346). It is stated in the guild records that this money was paid "sponte" because of the number of "foreign persons who were received into the city of Florence" at the behest of this guild "and considering the amount of grain they consume. . . ."

# IV

If the popular signory of 1343 was to achieve a longer tenure than its two predecessors—ten months and two months, respectively—it would have to gain a larger measure of public confidence. The new signory solved the problem of communal fiscal responsibility almost immediately by assuming complete liability for the many loans made by Brienne in the months of June and July of 1343. The breakdown of communal fiscal and juridical authority in the territories under the aegis of Florence was more difficult to remedy. Not only had many outlying cities revolted successfully against the republic, but communal power over the *contado* was deteriorating. In the month preceding the foundation of the popular regime, the *camera* received no revenues from these territories.[59] Even during the late 1330's, judging from fragmentary treasury records, rural communes and *popoli* fell far in arrears in their obligations to the republic. Not only did unpaid levies reach back as far as 1331 but services such as castle guard and road maintenance were also unfilled.[60] Particularly disturbing to the new signory was the reluctance of rural communes to report crimes committed in their territories to the tribunals in Florence. Many of those condemned as outlaws or banished to foreign lands continued to live in the outer reaches of the *contado*. A comparison of oligarchical communal policy in the *contado* from 1328 to 1342 with that of the popular signory suggests that the former was essentially laissez faire whereas the latter tended to enforce the law rigorously. Early records of inquests by Florentine magistrates for the years immediately after 1343 are replete with charges against syndics and rectors of rural communities who, in one way or another, had transgressed the law.[61] Administrative reforms simplified the task of communal magistrates, but as the *trecento* wore on, the duties of the magistrates were taken over by a rapidly burgeoning bureaucracy, which could operate with greater efficiency and at lower cost. So effective was this new bureaucracy that within two generations the administration of justice in the *contado* rested mainly in their hands. Paralleling this development was the increased use of communal notaries, who were dispatched in growing numbers to handle many problems of the *contado*.[62]

[59] *CCE,* Vol. II (Aug., 1343).
[60] *CCE,* II bis, fols. 214r, 227, 250–57, 293.
[61] See especially *CCE,* Vol. XII (Nov., 1345, to Dec., 1345); Vol. XIII (Jan., 1346, to Feb., 1346); Vol. XIV (Mar., 1346, to Apr., 1346).
[62] *Sindicato del Podestà,* Vols. I–II, *CCE,* IV, f. 81r.

The syndication of communal officials in the countryside was an especially important development. The city populace was incensed at certain prominent Florentine families who used high public office for personal aggrandizement. Like earlier popular signories, the regime had been established to initiate reforms, and one of its first moves was to review the conduct of those who had held high posts in rural Tuscany. Schiata Bartolo Cavalcanti, Bartolomeo Gherardo Adimari, and Giovanni Piero Alberti were among the first of the great patricians to be convicted for malfeasance, negligence, and peculation.[63] The Captain of Custody levied heavy fines upon syndics and rectors in the *contado* who had failed to seize malefactors or to report crimes committed in their bailiwick. Rural communes and *popoli* were condemned for harboring exiles or fugitives from communal justice.[64]

Particularly critical to a government seeking to reconstitute the fisc without imposing new forms of taxation was the prompt payment of military subsidies and the regular collection of imposts levied on the *contado*. When the officials in charge of the *estimo* in the *contado* brought suit against rural communes and *popoli* for tax delinquency, Florentine magistrates were quick to convict.[65] By communal decree an appraisal of property was made and the Captains of the Leagues enjoined to collect a subsidy of 4 foot soldiers for every 100 of assessed unpaid taxes (*pro quolibet centum estimi*). When rural communities failed to comply with this edict they were subject to heavy fines.[66] The city's capacity to meet its military budget without adding to public indebtedness depended upon the vigor with which her captains and magistrates exacted these levies from the *contado*.

Since the returns from the *estimo* imposed on the *contado* in late 1343 were probably paid directly to communal creditors,[67] the signory was eager to increase these receipts. Administrative reforms of that year rearranging boundaries of various districts outside the city walls reflected

[63] Schiata was fined 320 lire, 15 soldi; Bartolomeo was fined 300 lire; and Giovanni 322 lire, 10 soldi. *CCE,* VII, fols. 140, 150 (Aug. 14–23, 1344); VIII, f. 18 (Oct. 19, 1344).
[64] Fines for this type of offense reached as high as 300 lire; if payment was made within the allotted time a 25 per cent reduction was allowed. *CCE,* XIV, f. 22r; XII, fols. 40r–58r (Nov. 18, 1344, to Dec. 12, 1344).
[65] On November 29, 1344, 25 hamlets were fined a total of 1,600 lire on this charge. This figure must be used with caution since "compositione" was made with the treasury, and the amount actually paid into the *camera* could have been much less. *CCE,* X, f. 94.
[66] *CCE,* XV, fols. 65r ff.
[67] Returns from this tax do not appear in the treasury records until the early 1350's. In most instances when this occurred it signified that the money had been pledged for repayment of *prestanze.*

the regime's desire to simplify assessment and collection of taxes. At best, however, attempts at systematization tended to be makeshift, and sound procedures for reckoning and exacting communal imposts difficult to establish. Most troublesome to tax assessors was the problem of determining ownership of a particular piece of property to fix responsibility for taxes. In 1346 the signory appointed an extraordinary commission composed of nine leading notaries who were to draw up lists of those who held real estate in the *contado* and describe the properties. As a result there followed an unprecedented survey and evaluation of property; from this effort emerged "La tavola delle possessioni."[68] This was the first comprehensive attempt by any Florentine regime to systematize taxation in its territories. The signory hoped the "tavola" would provide precise identification of all rural rate payers together with a notation of their status. In the past individuals who had claimed to be inhabitants of the city and therefore not liable for country levies were identified by rural parishes, communes, and *popoli* as denizens of the *contado* and therefore responsible for these imposts. Since the rectors and syndics of outlying communities were liable for the difference between what was assessed and what was collected and disagreements caused "scandala" among the citizenry, inhabitants of the *contado* begged the signory to correct these inequities. It was also hoped that the "tavola" might aid creditors to locate the holdings of debtors. After nine years of intensive effort this ambitious plan had to be abandoned. Some claimed that the objectives of the "tavola" generated too much dissension in Florence.[69] Perhaps, too, the republic lacked the experienced bureaucracy necessary for the implementation of such a project. Much later and on a vaster scale, the dream of a "tavola" was realized with the foundation of the Florentine *Catasto* in 1427. The groping effort of the popular government to order communal finances and to construct a more rational base for Florentine taxation did represent a significant start, however, and although the machinery of the young state was incapable of accomplishing its rational objectives, the impulse towards systematization was indeed present.

## V

Communal policy towards the *contado* must be studied with relation to the total program induced by the general economic crisis of the early

[68] E. Fiumi, "L' imposta diretta nei comuni medioevali della Toscana," *Studi in onore di Armando Sapori* (Milan: 1957), pp. 341–42. For the names of the notaries, see *CCE,* XXI, f. 47r.
[69] M. Villani, *Cronica,* V, 74; *PD,* VI, f. 43r.

forties and the democratization of Florentine politics. The impulses toward reform in rural Tuscany were also present within the city walls. In the past popular signories had addressed themselves to the problem of recovering and then safeguarding communal rights and properties.[70] In the thirties, when Florentine government was oligarchical and revenues high, controls over the "iura et buona communis" were frequently ineffectual. Moreover, much state property had been assigned to magnates and great *popolani* for nominal rents. In other instances these *potentes* simply appropriated communal perquisites, and returns to the *camera* were minimal. Faced with imminent bankruptcy, the new regime tightened controls over state property by appointing numerous officials to supervise these valuable assets. Among the supervisors were such *novi cives* as Benitendi Tini, Piero Giafii, and Francesco ser Gramaldi.[71] Symptomatic of the new tenor of government were the many new men who held responsible posts in the growing communal bureaucracy; dyers, bakers, spicers, hosiers, and butchers served in the Florentine *camera* and notaries of modest origin were appointed to the offices of state auditor and assessor.[72] Less closely tied by marriage or political affiliation to the upper echelons of Florentine society, these men could administer the law with a zeal that shocked the adherents of the patriciate.

In May of 1345 the signory and the communal councils enacted sweeping legislation to recover communal property.[73] Giovanni Villani reserved his sharpest invective for the new men whom he held responsible for passing this nefarious decree.[74] The ingratitude of *il popolo,* he reminded his readers, knows no bounds; had not the plebes, even in the golden days of Rome, deprived the great patriot heroes of their just rewards? The signory, sensitive to this type of criticism, sought to justify its actions by contending that the expenses of government were "indeed heavy" and if this step were not taken then it would be necessary to impose new taxes. Therefore, certain state properties that had fallen into the hands of the great *magnati* families of the Della Tosa, Pazzi, and Rossi were to be restored to the commune. Villani claimed that the government had conferred much of this land in recognition of the many services these ancient houses had performed for their country. Just or unjust, this

[70] Cf. N. Ottokar, *Il comune di Firenze alla fine del dugento,* pp. 278 ff.; B. Barbadoro, *op. cit.,* pp. 62 ff.
[71] *CCE,* V, f. 10 (Mar. 16, 1344).
[72] Sixty-five per cent of all notaries who held communal office between 1343 and 1382 came from families recently migrated to the city. The holdings of these men in the funded communal debt averaged 200 florins.
[73] *P,* XXXIII, f. 43; *PD,* V, f. 64 (May 13, 1345).
[74] *Cronica,* XII, 54; *P,* XXXIV, f. 37.

measure was part of an over-all policy designed to raise revenue through the recovery of properties deemed public, and each time laws of this nature were enacted the signory offered the same alternative: if we don't resort to this, then we shall be compelled to further taxation of "cives et districtuales."[75]

The officers, vulgarly called "uffiziali della torre" in former years and later known as "offitiales super iuribus communis," made their first sizable payment—5,800 lire, 11 soldi, 10 denari—into the Florentine treasury on November 17, 1343, less than two months after the new regime took office.[76] Acting in concert with the "rationerii super iuribus communis" and specially elected magistrates, they brought to trial many of the most influential of the Florentine nobility, among them Adimari, Buondelmonti, Gherardini, Lupiciuni, Pulci, and Tigliamochi. All of these great magnates were judged guilty of usurping public property and condemned to heavy fines.[77] In June of 1344 the most prominent of all the Florentine *magnati*—the house of Bardi—was brought before the Executor of Justice on the same count. This family more than any other noble clan had influenced the course of Florentine politics during the preceding decade and had used its prestige and power to advance its private fortunes. Now they were being forced to disgorge their gains: 16 Bardi paid the substantial fine of 3,000 florins to the *camera* on June 10.[78] The nobility was not the only group to be affected by the vigorous and impartial enforcement of communal law: many *popolani* who had appropriated state properties were also condemned and forced to make restitution.[79]

Acting from the same imperatives, the popular signory made tax evasion much more difficult by extending communal jurisdiction over the collection of gabelles. Proceedings were initiated against former buyers of the gabelles who had failed to fulfill their commitments to the commune, indirect taxes were collected with unaccustomed rigor, and steps taken to prevent tax farmers (buyers of the gabelles) from committing frauds. In general the policies of the new regime were characterized by deep concern for the assertion of state fiscal prerogatives.[80]

[75] *PD,* VI, f. 29 (Mar. 27, 1346); G. Villani, XII, 44.
[76] *CCE,* III (Nov., 1343, to Dec., 1343). See especially entry on folio 36.
[77] *P,* XXXIII, fols. 2r–3r (June 2, 1344) and f. 6 (June 9, 1344); *CCE,* XVII, f. 16r. (Sept. 9, 1346). These convictions support Stefani's contention that *magnati* who held communal office had appropriated much state property and committed numerous extortions. Cf. Marchionne di Coppo Stefani, rub. 588. After the fall of the popular government, frequent dispensations were made to *magnati* who had been convicted on this charge. Cf. especially *CCE,* Vols. XXXIII, XXXIV (May, 1349, to Aug., 1349).
[78] *P,* XXXIII, f. 15.
[79] *CCE,* VI, f. 52; VII, f. 95.
[80] An extraordinary commission was created to prosecute these violators. *Ibid.,* VI, f. 52r.

This surge of public spiritedness was also reflected in increased control by the signory over the republic's many judicial and administrative officials. One of the most pronounced features of popular government was the strict syndication of communal magistrates. When the term of a *Podestà,* Captain of the People, or Executor of Justice expired, the signory elected special notaries, accountants, and lawyers to review their actions. The first conviction occurred on June 19, 1344, when a Captain of the People was found guilty of peculation of communal funds.[81] Theoretically it was extremely easy to punish such a magistrate, since the commune always withheld part of his salary until his term was completed; however, condemnations of this sort are rarely found in the judicial records. An explanation of this paradox can be sought through an understanding of power politics in fourteenth-century Italy. Since the magistracy included citizens from outside Florence, the republic ran the risk of antagonizing her neighbor if she condemned a judge from an adjacent state for a shortage in his accounts. Moreover, the many Florentines who served abroad as judicial officials might find themselves in an awkward position. Further, there was the unpleasant prospect of reprisal; another state might feel strongly enough to penalize Florentine merchants doing business within her confines. During intervals of oligarchical government Florentine courts were reluctant to convict magistrates from abroad, but with the advent of the popular signory this trend tended to be reversed. The latter demonstrated an enthusiasm for strict enforcement of law rarely displayed by any of its oligarchical predecessors. Nor was this zeal confined to the foreign judiciary but encompassed all communal administrative personnel. Little regard was shown the status-worthy, and there were more convictions as a result of syndication during the five-year interval of popular government than in a decade of oligarchical hegemony.[82] As a matter of fact the regime that succeeded the popular government regularly exempted communal officials from syndication and did its utmost to squash investigations of this type. The elaborate machinery used by the popular government to check abuses and violations of public trust fell temporarily into disuse, and grants of judicial dispensation were commonplace in 1349 and 1350.[83]

[81] *Ibid.,* f. 62r.

[82] Particularly interesting are the condemnations of rectors of rural *popoli. Ibid.,* IX, f. 30r (Nov. 13, 1344).

[83] *Ibid.,* XXXIV, f. 124 (July 2, 1349). Frequently when an individual was elected to serve as a magistrate in the *contado* it was stated that he was to be free from syndication. Cf. *P,* XXXVIII, f. 74r (June 21, 1350) for such a provision concerning a member of the Tornaquinci family. Treasurers of the *balie* were granted exemption from syndication. Cf. *ibid.,* XXXIX, f. 1 (Aug. 17, 1351); *P,* XXXIX, f. 15 (Aug. 20, 1351).

The numerous frauds committed by patricians who had held office during the 1330's and early 1340's were prosecuted by the popular signory. Particularly prominent among those condemned for peculation and malfeasance were members of The Twenty, elite of the old governing patriciate who had been given extraordinary authority in 1341 to conduct the war against Pisa. Charges of corruption and ineptitude, as well as public scandal in 1342, and prosecution by Walter of Brienne greeted the unsuccessful efforts of this elite. As we have observed, the specificity of the accusations and the abundant evidence furnished by Giovanni Villani induced the modern Florentine historian Armando Sapori to conclude that The Twenty were guilty as charged. However, although compelled to stand trial under Brienne in January of 1343, they were not convicted as a group. It was not until the new government assumed office that they were condemned *en masse*.[84]

In addition to these high-born office holders—the most influential men of the polis—many magnates were brought to justice for similar offenses. Reforming zeal became a regular feature of the rule of this popular signory, partly from the very impetus that had prompted the revolution! The failure of the old ruling patriciate had become increasingly apparent to *novi cives* and political independents.

Because the political environment of the city-state was intensely personal there was a tendency to blame communal misadventure on prominent patricians. After 1343 the Albizzi, Buondelmonti, Visdomini, and others were singled out and charged with fraud and grievous negligence in the fulfillment of public trusts.[85] Upon conviction, however, the troubles of the state began, for frequently the culprits were tried in *absentia* and the courts actually passed sentence upon those who had put up security for them. The prudent Giovanni Villani never tired of citing the Tuscan proverb that any signory that threatened one citizen must in the end threaten all. In this instance his chatty maxim was prophetic, since the conviction of a Buondelmonti meant that a Rossi or a Frescobaldi going security for him was liable for the fine.[86] Since each communal

[84] A Sapori, *La crisi,* pp. 132–47; C. Paoli, *op. cit.,* 103–4; *LF,* XXV, f. 16r; *Capitoli,* XVIII, f. 88 (Dec. 11, 1344).

[85] On May 7, 1344, two *novi cives,* Agostino Cocchi, a dyer, and Sandro Mancini, seconded proposals designed to punish former *castellani.* Cf. *LF,* XXIII, fols. 10–10r. The signory consulted with the captains of the city's twenty-one guilds on the feasibility of punishing other communal officials. There was great opposition to actions of this type, especially in the Council of the Podestà, where the older patriciate had its greatest representation. Cf. *ibid.,* f. 10r (May 8, 1345); *P,* XXXIII, f. 43 (May 13, 1345).

[86] A Buondelmonti was fined 5,161 lire, 16 soldi; for the names of those who were held liable for this condemnation see *P,* XXXIV, f. 3r; *CCE,* VI, f. 72r (June 19, 1344).

officeholder was required to have *fideiussores* who would post bond for him, when the signory took action against a single corrupt official it posed a serious threat to the many who were responsible for him. Thus the condemnation of one errant Bardi for exceeding the prerogatives of his office meant that assessments could be made against the property of his relations.[87] Any regime embarking on the treacherous waters of reform could count upon incurring the enmity of the many by moving against the few.

## VI

One of the most troublesome and least investigated problems of *trecento* Florence concerns the *magnati*. Composed of just under a hundred clans with a membership of well over a thousand, the *magnati* or magnates have a history that remains to be written. Certainly by northern European standards these Florentines would hardly qualify as nobles. Many not only failed to practice the ancient and honorable profession of arms, but what was even more deplorable, at least half their number engaged in some form of business. The matriculae of the great guilds of the period disclose that *magnati* were regularly inscribed as masters.[88] Few of their number would have been welcomed as peers by the knights of the north, and by the same token, these *magnati* were suspect to *il popolo* of Florence.

Traditional explanations of *popolani* hostility have emphasized the natural antipathy between commercial bourgeoisie and land holders. In the light of recent studies, however, this interpretation must be rejected, for both classes owned real estate in the city and *contado,* and both engaged in commerce and manufacturing.[89] Yet distinctions did exist between the two orders, not the least of which was their style of life. With characteristic snobbery the *magnati* tended to take lightly laws propagated by a popular signory and were thus prone to resort to violence to settle grievances. Since they belonged to a powerful *consorteria,* many could count upon the support of as many as a hundred of their kinsmen when there was trouble. Intimidation of witnesses, street fights and blood

[87] *Ibid*. f. 89 (June 30, 1344).
[88] For a critique of the older conception of class divisions in Florentine economic life see A. Sapori, *La crisi,* pp. 118–20.
[89] E. Fiumi, "Fioritura e decadenza dell'economia fiorentina," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* pp. 385–439; M. Becker, "Some Aspects of Oligarchical, Dictatorial, and Popular *Signorie*," *Comparative Studies in Society and History,* pp. 421–25.

feuds, and attacks upon communal officials who sought to execute the law were commonplace. In the far reaches of the *contado,* where communal writ scarcely ran, these families were a law unto themselves.

Tower societies in the city and rural fortifications in the countryside made the administration of justice even more uncertain. Feudal prerogatives persisted, and ecclesiastical magnates continued to employ authority and status to frustrate the execution of Florentine law.[90] Gradation in dress, position in processionals, and choice seats at festivals and solemn ceremonies lent them distinction; service abroad in the great courts and intermarriage with the Italian nobility added further luster. Finally, membership in honorific institutions such as the *Parte Guelfa* gave them a great sense of worth. The *Parte* was closely tied to the Roman church and a religious aura surrounded the Guelf captains. *Magnati* were well represented in the high offices of the *Parte* as well as in the ranks of Tuscan upper clergy. The bishoprics of Florence and Fiesole had become virtually their preserve.[91] Therefore any signory seeking to curb the more intractable members of the great clans would incur the hostility of both the Florentine clergy and the *Parte.*

The new men deeply resented the fact that high offices in the church and the Guelf party were monopolized by magnates. So subtly were magnate clans fused with great *popolani* families that the two were frequently indistinguishable. Intermarriage, political alliances, and business partnerships throughout the thirteenth century had brought these two echelons of communal society so close together that by the middle of the fourteenth century the most powerful *magnati*—the Bardi—differed little from leading *popolani* such as the Peruzzi and Acciaiuoli. Judging from the history of the rather newish Strozzi, new *popolani* were anxious to embrace the more violent style of life of the *magnati.* Thus whenever a Strozzi suffered a slight, real or imagined, he resorted to arms. This brutal egoism is fully documented in the Florentine court records after 1343, so that we find such *popolani* families as the Strozzi, who a generation ago were engaged in amassing property and lending on pledges, engaged in avenging their honor.[92] The problem confronting a popular signory, then, involved the regulation of rampant lawless behavior among

[90] Marchionne di Coppo Stefani, *op. cit.,* rub. 616; N. Rodolico, *I Ciompi,* p. 42.
[91] The bishop of Florence at the time was Angelo Acciaiuoli, and over the next generation the episcopal sees of Florence and Fiesole were occupied by such great families as the Antella, Ricasoli, and Corsini. Cf. A. Panella, "La guerra degli Otto Santi e le vicende della legge contro i vescovi," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* XCIX (1941), 36–49.
[92] P. J. Jones, *op. cit.,* pp. 186–91.

*magnati* and *popolani grassi.* Contemporary documents made no distinction between the two orders but referred to them collectively as *potentes.*[93]

Writing about an earlier interval of popular rule, the Florentine chronicler Dino Compagni, whose view of politics was tempered by moral imperatives, stated that the signory took pains to enjoin communal magistrates to see that justice was administered to all. The judiciary especially was urged to prevent the great and the powerful from oppressing the small and the weak. While serving in the signory of Giano della Bella (1293–95), Compagni had an opportunity to assist in writing into Florentine legislation just such a provision designed to curb the abuses of the overmighty against the helpless.[94] Despite repeated efforts by communal authorities, many *magnati* continued to defy the law with impunity. During the decade of the 1330's, ten members of the Aleis clan, five Bardi, seven Cavalcanti, ten Frescobaldi, eight Giandonati, ten Norli, eleven Rossi, five Squarcialupi, four Della Tosa, and three Tornabelli committed crimes ranging from assault with a deadly weapon to homicide. Forty-six *magnati* families were convicted of 146 serious breaches of communal law; most of these convictions were for attacks by *magnati* on *popolani,* but there were more spectacular charges as well: arson, murder, devastation of church property, attacks on communal fortifications, highway robbery, and treason. Yet these sentences were never carried out because the magnate families were able to secure judicial dispensation. Upon payment of a small fine, the magnates were able to have even the most severe condemnations annulled, and in the years immediately preceding the popular revolution, 1341 to 1343, this practice became chronic.[95]

Those who recorded the events from 1343 to 1348 agreed that *il popolo* were particularly hostile to magnates, lay and ecclesiastical, who employed their power to oppress the poor and the weak. According to the chronicler Stefani, they were most incensed at those who used the inhabitants of the *contado* cruelly. Giovanni Villani and an anonymous *priorista* further claimed that popular animus was also directed against high

[93] Still extremely useful on this and a variety of other questions concerning the Florentine nobility is Gaetano Salvemini's *La dignità cavalleresca nel comune di Firenze* (Florence: 1896), pp. 22 ff.

[94] *P,* IV, fols. 129–30.

[95] There were ninety-eight *magnati* families living in Florentine territory at this time. For a list of the dispensations, see *GA,* Vol. CXXII and *CCE,* II bis. Very significant was the removal of condemnations against such Ghibelline *magnati* as the Amadori, Falconieri, and Pulci. Cf. *ibid.,* f. 70 (Dec. 23, 1342).

clergy from great families who exercised ecclesiastical authority for self-aggrandizement.[96] It must be understood that the policies of the popular signory aimed to check the chronic abuses perpetuated by the overmighty, noble or commoner, and were not generated by antipathy for the nobility. Rather they stemmed from resentment against great families who throughout the preceding decade had not only ignored the law but had also made the signory their personal preserve. Accordingly, legislation passed during the tenure of the popular government had a twofold purpose: to punish criminous *potentes* and to reduce the inordinate influence of the great families.

Two months after the new regime took office the Ordinances of Justice —so despised by the *magnati*—were re-enacted. More than any other set of Florentine laws, these "Felicita" ordinances reflected the commitment of the medieval commune to end violence. Through this type of legislation northern Italian cities hoped to establish the tranquil, orderly society so necessary to the welfare of artisan merchants. Much to the horror of the Florentines, Walter of Brienne had permitted these ordinances to lapse. The short-lived aristocratic coalition that ruled Florence in the late summer of 1343 took an even more radical and unpopular step when it annulled them. In November of the same year the popular signory decreed that the ordinances were once again in effect and that therefore all magnates had to post security for continued good behavior.[97] The penalties for crimes of violence were doubled and tripled, with the result that magnates were dealt with more severely than other classes. In the following year the new regime strengthened the ancient Ordinances by extending the principle of collective responsibility so that magnates were liable for the crimes of distant kinsmen.[98]

The earliest convictions occurred only a month after the laws were reactivated. Gerio Manetti Gherardini, of the "magnates et potentes," was tried *in absentia* and found guilty of the homicide of one of the "populares," a certain Francesco Lapuccio. Fifteen of Gherardini's consorts were compelled to pay the stiff fine of 3,000 lire for their kinsman's flagrant violation of the Ordinances.[99] During the same month Bernardino messer Filippo, of the noble house of Cavalcanti, was likewise con-

[96] Cf footnote 90. Stefani states: "Sequendo i cherici molti soperchi in molti modi, ed infra quali erano molti grandi e popolani grassi, li quali battiano e oltraggiavano li minuti, cognizione non era appo li secolari rettori."
[97] *P*, XXXII, f. 73 (Nov. 14, 1343).
[98] *Ibid.*, XXXIII, fols. 2r (June 2, 1344) and 100r.
[99] *CCE*, IV, f. 57r (Jan. 14, 1344).

demned *in absentia* on an identical charge, and his *consorteria* was required to pay a similar fine.[100] Shortly thereafter the Gherardini again ran afoul of the law and this time were fined the exorbitant sum of 6,000 lire.[101] Two of the Ianbernardi, a branch of the noble house of Adimari, were fined 500 lire each for molesting the Florentine artisan Master Jacapo, a *popolano*.[102] Pierozzo Bertolino Giandonati, a magnate, paid 300 lire for assaulting the eminent guildsman and leading *popolano* Matteo Zuccheri Soderini.[103] A few days later Guerra messer Monte Buondelmonti, of the aristocratic clan of Buondelmonti, attacked a humble *contadino* with a knife—and paid 1,000 lire into the treasury. Early in 1344 his kinsman Valore, son of the knight Peppo Buondelmonti, was condemned by the *Podestà* for attacking a *popolano* and fined 3,000 lire.[104] Among the many other *magnati* families who felt the full force of the Ordinances were Adimari, Aleis, Bordoni, Della Tosa, Donati, Mancini, Pazzi, Rossi, and Tornabelli.[105]

The *Camera del Comune* records the many payments made by the *consorterie* and the *fideiussores* of the criminous *magnati* from 1343 through 1347. Unlike the earlier era of oligarchical government, the popular period saw the verdicts of communal courts executed, not thwarted by judicial dispensation. It was only with the fall of the popular signory in 1347 and 1348 that the high born were once again permitted to purchase absolution.[106] More than any other single practice, the granting of judicial dispensation serves to illustrate an essential difference between an oligarchical and a popular regime.

Not only was communal law in general enforced with greater vigor throughout the tenure of the popular government, but Florentine statutes disclose that penalties for crimes of violence were especially severe. In

[100] *Ibid.*, fols. 60r–61 (Jan. 20, 1344).
[101] Payment was made into the *camera* by fifteen members of this house. *Ibid.*, f. 66r (Jan. 28, 1344).
[102] *Ibid.*, f. 65 (Jan. 20, 1344).
[103] *Ibid.*, f. 67 (Jan. 28, 1344).
[104] *Ibid.*, V, fols. 1r, 24 (Mar. 3, 1344, to Apr. 3, 1344).
[105] *Ibid.*, Vols. V–XVII.
[106] See the reversals of the condemnations against certain of the Buondelmonti who were convicted of peculation of communal funds in October of 1344. Fines of 2,000 lire were canceled in May of 1349 upon payment of 87 lire. This practice was a commonplace during the years immediately after the Black Death. Cf. *ibid.*, XXXIII, f. 99. It began late in 1347 when the authority of the popular government was already much weakened. Cf. *ibid.*, XXII, 68 (July 30, 1347) for grants of dispensation to members of the Frescobaldi family who had been convicted of seizing church lands in July of 1344. By special provision sentences were to be commuted at the rate of three denari per lira.

1344 a provision was enacted decreeing that any person from Florence or the *contado* who offended a citizen or a *contadino* by violence "studiose vel premeditate" would be dealt with harshly. If he committed the same offense twice the fine was doubled and his name inscribed in the book of *Maleabliati.* The evil-doer was not permitted to escape with a mere fine but was required to suffer the loss of a hand. In addition he was barred from communal office for life.[107] The first person to be convicted under this law was the noble Simone Boscoli, who in August of 1344 was tried *in absentia* and condemned by the *Podestà* to have his name inscribed in this book for the homicide of the *popolano* Ser Francesco. He returned to the city shortly after the fall of the popular government and bought judicial dispensation for seventy-five lire.[108] Coupled with this measure were the several provisions increasing fines for carrying weapons. Even short knives were prohibited; nor was anyone permitted to bear arms unless he was an authorized official of the commune. This legislation specifically stated that this proscription applied to everyone, no matter what his "status, office, or dignity." These laws aimed at the might of the *consorteria,* but they also had the subtler, more devious purpose of weakening popular respect for the Holy Office in Florence.[109] Church dignitaries were not permitted to grant magnates the right to bear arms. Traditionally, the inquisitor licensed armed men to aid him in performing his duties, and the Holy Office in Florence had a small army of perhaps 250 to do its bidding. In 1344 the signory denied this right to the inquisitor and went a step farther by refusing to lend him the assistance of the secular arm.

Impersonal government implied not only impartial enforcement of communal law but also the attenuation of privileged status by shifting power from the clergy and great magnates to communal rectors and by extending representation to the upper-middle echelons of society. This shift had begun more than two centuries earlier with the weakening of the medieval ties of kinship. The same movement was at work throughout the European world in the late Middle Ages, and the tendency to restrict the right of vendetta, the intrusion of state justice into what had been clan matters, statutory proscription of what constitutes blood relationship,

[107] *Statuti,* XV, Bk. 3, rub. 78.

[108] *CCE,* XXXIV, f. 127 (July 2, 1349). On the same day Simone's kinsman Nerio paid fifty lire to have a condemnation of March, 1344, canceled. He had been convicted for committing assault against a *popolano* and fined 2,900 lire.

[109] For the background of the conflict between the commune and the church over the activities of the inquisitor in 1345 and 1346 see M. Becker, "Florentine Politics and the Diffusion of Heresy in the *Trecento*," *Speculum,* XXXIV (1959), 62–64.

and the acceptance of petitions by governments from individuals who "forswore" their *consorteria* bear witness to this fact. The more prosperous the region, the more family ties were modified, since extension of capitalistic methods to agriculture tended to break up large family holdings.

The urban economy also played a crucial role in weakening the bonds of kinship. Some families had members at virtually every point of the economic spectrum. The metiers followed by a single clan might run the gamut from pawnbroker or butcher to international banker, with the consequence that one Strozzi or Medici or Bardi or Donati might be the wealthiest man in his neighborhood while another was inscribed among the city's large roll of paupers. Even among the nobles of the *contado* one member of an ancient clan might cultivate land as a laborer, while his kinsmen lived the lordly lives of land owners.

Communal politics also undermined family solidarity. Some *magnati* associated themselves with the *parte popolare* while their kinsmen retained traditional aristocratic allegiances. In the years immediately after 1343 political factionalism eroded the cohesiveness of certain great commoner families such as the Strozzi and Medici. The former provided a leader for a workers' rebellion and at the same time helped staff the captaincy of the antipopular *Parte Guelfa*. Certain Medici were engineers of popular revolution while others just as doggedly sought to preserve the status quo.[110]

Government policies encouraged family dissolution. As the authority of the state expanded, voluntary withdrawal from the kindred group likewise increased. In times past the individual had been compelled to rely upon his *consorteria* for protection; when the state grew more effective he was less in need of this protection. Thus there was a marked increase in the number of petitions submitted to the signory by men who desired to live "peaceful and tranquil lives" and believed that the way to achieve this goal was to forswear their lawless consorts. Particularly noteworthy are the many magnates who took this drastic step; some went so far as to renounce their coat of arms and change their family names. Some broke up their households and moved to another quarter of the city in order to disassociate themselves from their kin.[111]

Many of the Florentine *magnati* lived in such a manner as to win the admiration of the good burghers. They had long shunned appeals to

[110] G. Brucker, "The Medici in the Fourteenth Century," *Speculum*, XXXII (1957), 7–10.
[111] *P*, XLII, fols. 99–113.

arms and evolved a style of life that was to earn the contempt of the greatest of Florentine historians, Machiavelli. To their contemporaries of the fourteenth century, however, the decline of martial spirit among the magnates was a blessing. In October of 1343 the new signory rewarded 530 of the most law-abiding magnates by bestowing commoner status upon them. Thus almost half the city's *magnati* were liberated from the harsh and repressive stipulations of the Ordinances of Justice.[112] No longer were they required to post security for continued good behavior or held accountable for the crimes of their kinsmen. Moreover, they were declared eligible for certain communal offices that hitherto had been closed to them; even the highest positions in the commune were to be accessible to them within twenty-five years. Although similar measures had been enacted by earlier popular signories and had undermined the solidarity of the *magnati,* none had been so large in scale. The *consorteria* of certain houses was shattered and during the remainder of the *trecento* an ever-increasing number of ex-magnates became involved in the life of the commune. Slowly the transfer of loyalties from private to public concerns was encouraged.

Machiavelli drew his facts for the history of this period from the chronicle of Giovanni Villani, but his inferences were disarmingly original. In his *History of Florence* he advanced a thesis that has not been given the serious attention it merits: "The ruin of the nobility was so complete, and depressed them so much, that they never afterward ventured to take arms for the recovery of their power, but soon became humbled and abject in the extreme. And thus Florence lost the generosity of her character and her distinction in arms."[113] It was the popular government that tamed the old nobility, and the most casual glance at communal history documents their decline. The three principal conspiracies to overthrow the government between 1323 and 1343 were led and staffed mainly by magnates. After 1343, as Machiavelli justly observed, there was no major *magnati* insurrection in the city. Leadership of the contending factions passed into the hands of the great *popolani* families of the Albizzi, Medici, Ricci, and Strozzi. In the 1370's, when certain of the *magnati* were outraged by communal policy, they found their spokesmen in the ranks of the *popolani.*[114] Although we cannot subscribe to Machiavelli's attempt to correlate the decline of military

[112] G. Villani, *Cronica,* XII, 22.

[113] N. Machiavelli, *op. cit.,* p. 107.

[114] For the opinions of this most obdurate of the *arciguelfi,* the eminent canon lawyer and man of letters Lapo da Castiglionchio, see P. J. Jones, *op. cit.,* pp. 191–92.

prowess with the humbling of the magnate class in the middle years of the *trecento,* we must not ignore his incisive comments concerning the changing status of the magnates: ". . . it became necessary for [the magnates] not only to seem like the people, but to be like them in behavior, mind and mode of living."[115] So far had Florentines moved from their ancient commitments that for the balance of the fourteenth century such chivalric rites as tournaments and jousting appeared ludicrous to the burghers. Yet it would be an error to assume that medieval knightly ritual had lost its appeal to the Florentines for all time. Again in the fifteenth century the trappings, pomp, and contests of chivalry were to entrance the citizenry; the Renaissance knight was in flower. Similarly, we must not, with Machiavelli, ascribe generosity of feeling and concern for honor to the magnate class alone: these virtues also found a place in the discordant ethic of the burghers which lauded benevolence, magnanimity, and largesse along with prudence and parsimony. It is simpler to trace the decline of feudal style by observing the disappearance of armorial bearings and family titles than it is to depict the gradual process by which the chivalric code was grafted onto the merchant's family tree. It was a bourgeois of the early fifteenth century, Leon Battista Alberti, who extolled the cult of the clan and dedicated himself to the proposition that rational business conduct was indeed compatible with feudal conditions.[116]

## VII

The new signory of 1343 spoke for the many affluent artisans, merchants, and industrialists of the city. These 3,500 or more guild masters, each matriculated in one of the 21 legally constituted guilds, were part of an unprecedented political experiment.[117] Never before had office been distributed so widely or so many newcomers been called to positions of public trust. Dyers served in the communal treasury, vintners handled public money, bakers recruited troops, blacksmiths were entrusted with

[115] N. Machiavelli, *op. cit.,* p. 109.

[116] See pertinent comments of R. de Roover, *op. cit.,* pp. 18–19.

[117] This statistic is based upon the fact that approximately 3,500 men were matriculated in the guilds in the years immediately preceding the Black Death. Interestingly enough, it corresponds almost exactly with the figure, presented by Villani in his *Cronica,* of 3,446 citizens who were considered for high office in 1343 (XII, 22). To be eligible for consideration, one had to be a guild master; presumably then, since the numbers are virtually equal, all guild masters were considered to be candidates for the signory. Cf. footnote 119.

the maintenance of bridges and roads, mercers reviewed the accounts of rectors and audited the balance of the *camera,* grocers and butchers served as high magistrates in rural districts, and doublet makers held ambassadorial posts and staffed other important diplomatic missions. This was the "buono reggimento" favored in the abstract by Tuscan Aristotelians and Florentine chroniclers; for representation was extended not only to the prosperous *popolani* and the nobility but also to the middling and lesser guildsmen.[118] To preserve the constitution of 1343, which afforded such extensive representation to the *novi cives,* it was necessary to curb the political influence and ambition of the great families in order to prevent the displacement of the new guildsmen from office. This was accomplished in October of 1343 when the *divieto* was put into effect.[119] This ancient legislation prohibited members of the same family from holding high office simultaneously and determined the interval during which a citizen was ineligible for re-election; it also barred the nobility from certain key positions. This type of enactment lent an impersonal tone to the conduct of civic affairs since it restricted the influence of the large old families and encouraged the political mobility of the newer elements.

The Villani brothers claimed that the *divieto* more than any other form of legislation was responsible for the rise of the *mezzani* and the *minori.*[120] The lists of names of candidates for office inscribed in the books of the republic (the *Tratte*) show that the *divieto* excluded many patricians from posts. If one of the Strozzi sat in the priorate, fifty of his kinsmen might be denied entry; the larger the clan the less opportunity

[118] Political theorists such as Ptolemy of Lucca accommodated St. Thomas's Aristotelianism to the Tuscan communal experience. Ptolemy turned St. Thomas's teachings so that they were no longer directed toward the support of monarchy as the ideal form; now Thomistic arguments were used to buttress the contention that the republic was the best of all types of regimes. This tendency to identify "buon governo" with republican and representative *signorie* is to be seen in the art of *trecento* Tuscany. Cf. N. Rubinstein, "Political Ideas in Sienese Art," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* XXI (1958), 178–207; H. Wieruszowski, "Art and the Commune in the Time of Dante," *Speculum,* XIX (1944), 14–33. It is also much in evidence in sermons and other ecclesiastical writings of the period. Cf. C. T. Davis, "An Early Florentine Political Theorist: Fra Remigio De' Girolami," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society,* CIV (1960), 662–76. Giovanni Villani criticizes the regime of 1340 because it did not bestow representation upon the *mezzani* or the *minori,* as a "buono reggimento di comune" should (*Cronica,* XI, 118).

[119] G. Villani, *Cronica,* XII, 22. Only 10 per cent of the 3,446 citizens considered eligible for office were found to possess all the necessary qualifications for the highest communal posts—the priorate and the colleges. This did not mean that they were excluded from lesser positions, and the treasury records are replete with the names of guild masters who served in a minor capacity.

[120] M. Villani, *Cronica,* VII, 24; Donato Velluti, *Cronica,* ed. I. del Lungo and G. Volpi (Florence: 1914), pp. 241–49.

for holding office. But like so many other communal statutes, the *divieto* had frequently been observed in the breach; this had been the case before the advent of the popular signory. From 1343 through 1347, however, few old families held high posts repeatedly; instead, public trust came to be vested more in the hands of *novi cives* from families recently come to prominence in the guilds. Newcomers served in all the important offices with the exception of the captaincy of the *Parte Guelfa* and the office of Court Merchant—and before long they won representation in these as well.[121] Further restrictions were placed on patrician power in 1346 by laws prohibiting *grandi* from marrying foreign princes, lords, or barons and denying them the right to exercise any judicial or fiscal prerogatives.[122]

The oligarchical government of the thirties directed by the scions of the great houses was replaced by a signory of the twenty-one guilds. It was the captains of these guilds who met in October of 1343 to draw up lists of candidates for office. If we compare the statutes of the *Podestà* of 1322 and 1325 with those enacted just thirty years later, the singular growth of authority of the twenty-one guilds is striking. The earlier code declared that only the captains of the twelve greater guilds were eligible to serve on commissions for the revision of communal statutes, while the latter entrusted this vital task to the captains of all twenty-one.[123] During the thirties only the rectors of the greater guilds were called in by the signory to consider important political questions, but during subsequent decades the opinions of representatives from both major and minor guilds were solicited. After 1345 the consuls from the twenty-one *arti* participated in the election of high communal magistrates and extraordinary officials whose selection had been the exclusive concern of the greater guildsmen. After 1343 it was the captains of the greater and lesser guilds who introduced the most important legislation.[124]

Gains made by the lesser guilds were not limited to the area of com-

[121] The new men who were declared eligible for admission into the captaincy of the *Parte* in 1366 and for entry into the *Mercanzia* six years later were masters from the minor guilds. Cf. *P,* LIV, fols. 81–83 (Dec. 8, 1366); Marchionne di Coppo Stefani, *op. cit.,* rub. 734; *Capitoli,* XI, 27.

[122] *PD,* VI, fols. 144–47r. This measure was counseled by a bridle-maker. *Statuto del Capitano* (1355), V, f. 54.

[123] Compare the *Statuto del Podestà,* Bk. I, rub. 53 (1322–25), with *Statuto del Podestà,* Bk. I, rub. 264 (1355). It should be noted that upon occasion the number of guilds legally defined as major *arti* was twelve. The usual procedure, however, was to limit the *arti maggiori* to seven.

[124] See footnote 47 and *PD,* V, f. 54 (April 2, 1345); *ibid.,* VI, f. 35r (April 4, 1346) for laws against the church. Now all *arti* participated in imborsation for office, and the consuls of the twenty-one guilds took part in the election of communal magistrates. Cf. *P,* XXXIV, f. 41 (April 21, 1346).

munal politics but extended to other matters of vital interest to the guild masters. Prior to 1343 the juridical competence of the lesser guilds was severely limited; only tribunals of the first five major guilds were empowered to hear suits calling for unlimited damages, the remaining sixteen *arti* were given jurisdiction over cases involving only small sums.[125] With the revision, seven additional guilds were given authority over litigation up to the sizable amount of 300 lire and the rest were permitted to try cases involving sums up to 200 lire. These reforms represented a victory for the elite of the lesser guilds whose tribunals were now able to try cases involving amounts eight times higher than their former prerogatives had allowed.

The authority of the master butchers, vintners, carpenters, and other domestic artificers was further enhanced in August of 1344 when the signory accepted a petition of the twenty-one guilds to give them jurisdiction over anyone who engaged in these trades. The enactment was especially complex and has never been adequately described by economic historians; even now there are aspects of this legislation which cannot be readily interpreted. Essentially the law was framed to force small retailers and manufacturers into the guild matrix.[126] Not only did they fall under guild jurisdiction, but they were liable for all guild imposts as well. This latter requirement was particularly troublesome to enforce, since many petty tradesmen attempted to avoid the levies by refusing to inscribe their names on guild rolls. Naturally, the advantages of resisting matriculation were considerable. The force of communal law was on the side of the *minori* elite, however, and in April of 1345 the treasurer and syndics of the bakers' guild petitioned the Executor of Justice to compel bakers to pay all taxes, condemnations, and assessments levied by their consuls.[127] In July there was a similar request from the vintners.[128] Two years later the authority of the twenty-one guilds was further strengthened when the signory acted to prohibit any appeals from the verdicts of the consuls of the *arti*. Heretofore, it had been possible for dissident guildsmen to call upon the Court Merchant to reverse these decisions.[129]

The tendency to encourage the fragmentation of the lesser guilds, so much in evidence during intervals when the oligarchs of the *arti*

[125] *Mercanzia,* III, f. 115; *Legnaioli,* III, f. 15; *Statuto del Podestà,* Bk. II, rub. 85 (1322–25).
[126] *Statuto del Podestà,* Bk. II, rubs. 84, 1355. This rubrica is a copy of the provision enacted by the communal councils on August 17, 1344.
[127] *Atti del Esecutore,* XXIX, fols. 196–97.
[128] *Ibid.,* XL, f. 112.
[129] *P,* XXXIV, f. 43 (Apr. 11, 1346).

*maggiori* dominated the signory, was thus reversed, with significant consequences for Florence's domestic economy. Before attempting to deal with the effects of this change, however, we must consider the relationship between the elite of the lesser guilds and the great body of petty artisans and shopkeepers. There were many gradations within the ranks of the *arti minori,* from the highest degree of affluence and social status to the meanest of stations in the artisan world. It was the former—the *arti minori* elite—who held high posts in the republic at this time and who dominated guild machinery. These great *minori* sought to compel their less fortunate guild brethren to contribute toward the expenses of the *arte* and to pay a share of communal levies. They also were anxious to extend guild control over the many unorganized artisans and retailers and to use the courts of the lesser guilds to collect outstanding debts from the petty artificers and merchants. Of greatest concern to *minori* leaders were *maggiori* policies that depressed the price of foodstuffs by fostering competition between independent sellers and producers on the one hand and *minori* on the other. Unmatriculated artisans and tradesmen were permitted to sell at prices far below guild minimums. This tactic was especially effective coupled with antimonopoly legislation that forbade *minori* consuls from interfering with the business dealings of the unmatriculated.[130] Free trade and fierce competition were thus stimulated by allowing nonguild members to sell in the marketplace without being subject to the authority of the guild consuls or amenable to the provisions of the guild constitutions. All who desired to vend meat or wine or wood could do so, and any *minori* attempt to hamper them was punishable by heavy fine. Therefore, when the powerful pork butchers, vintners, and wood corders wished to force the unorganized vendors to matriculate in the appropriate guild, they were attempting to put an end to policies detrimental to the interests of the upper echelons of the *arti minori*. Within less than a year the *minori* elite won a singular victory: in August of 1344 unorganized producers and distributors were brought under the aegis of the *minori* consuls, and the courts began to interpret antimonopoly legislation so that it no longer weakened the authority of the rectors of the lesser guilds.[131]

Even since the late thirteenth century, Florence, like so many other medieval cities, had been preoccupied with the formulation and enforce-

[130] *P,* VI, f. 24 (May 15, 1296); IX, f. 47r (July 31, 1298).

[131] A. Doren, *Le arti fiorentine,* II (Florence: 1940), 17–18; Vinattièri, I, fols. 41–44; M. Becker, "La Esecuzione della legislazione contro le pratiche monopolistiche," *Archivio Storico Italiano,* pp. 8–28.

ment of legislation against guild practices that might increase the price of goods and services to the consumer. Vague precepts to this effect were included in the ordinances of the city, but because they were stereotyped and ineffective it is difficult to determine how strictly they were enforced. Fortunately, data from the treasury records permit us to examine this matter in greater detail. During the 1330's many guildsmen were fined by the communal courts for violations of the ordinances against monopoly.[132] Each instance involved a minor guildsman selling food or services; not a single major guildsman was convicted. The seven greater guilds had autonomy in a variety of economic matters, while the fourteen lower guilds were frequently subject to government regulation. Thus it appears that ordinances were enforced in a discriminatory fashion and that the twenty-one guilds were not in fact equal before the communal law.

After 1343, when the minor guilds were granted representation, the ordinances on monopoly were interpreted somewhat differently. Accusations were made against the consuls of both the major and the minor guilds. Action was brought not against individual guildsmen but against the entire body of the twenty-one guilds on charges of violating anti-monopoly ordinances.[133] With *minori* no longer relegated to an inferior position, the city was well on the way to becoming a guild republic. The sovereignty of the signory and her courts extended over the guilds of the city; public interest had triumphed over those corporate rights that served to perpetuate the differential status and treasured immunities of the *arti*.

## VIII

Changes in the character of Florentine government after 1343 involved substantial alterations in the ruling order of the polis. It is to the ruling elite that we must turn if we are to appreciate the dramatic difference between the gentle paideia of the early *trecento* and the stern paideia that prevailed after 1343.

There is one feature that virtually all *novi cives* share: during the mid-*trecento* they were among the principal creditors of the commune. It is they, in the company of the most durable patrician elements, who shall continue to furnish the *camera* needed capital by means of short-

[132] M. Becker, *op. cit.*, 11–12.

[133] Equality before the law in this instance resulted in the dismissal of the charges against the *arti*. With the fall of the popular signory the courts once again interpreted the law in a discriminatory fashion, and only lesser guildsmen were convicted. Cf. *Atti del Esecutore,* Vol. CCXI (Aug. 9, 1349, to Dec. 27, 1349). This volume contains "inquisitiones contra artifices contrafacientes ordinamentis comunis florenti[a]e."

term loans. Their *prestanze* were incorporated into the funded communal debt (*Monte*) so that over the years they became the most formidable financiers of far-flung governmental operations. During the fifties and sixties the maxim so appropriate to the Florentine political scene was especially relevant: Those who furnish the polis with capital shall soon be included among its rulers.

Thus such figures as the grocer, Niccolo Delli; the used-clothing dealer, Giovanni Goggio; the silk and wool merchants, Giovanni, Piero, and Francesco Pantaleoni; the *cambiatores,* the house of Bianciardi; the dyer, Nerio Lippi; and the *nouveau* Iacopo Renzi (a partner in the newly formed Bardi Company) were all among the vanguard of communal creditors in the San Giovanni section of the city.[134] In Santa Croce an identical situation was in evidence. The politically active ironmonger, Master Torello Dino, acquired enormous credits in the *Monte* between 1343 and 1361. Very relevant are the numerous transactions carried out by this astute master of the lesser guilds. Purchases of *Monte* shares were made regularly from magnate families such as the Bordoni, Boscoli, Circuli, Gherardini, Girolami, Forese, and Pazzi.[135] However, by the 1340's there was an economic shift throughout the city which profoundly altered the course of civic life. Magnates and other eminent members of antique Florentine society were no longer relied upon to support the burgeoning demands of the public fisc. Instead, if we review the holdings of such first families in the Santa Croce section, a startling trend becomes apparent. The Abbati, Amadei, Amadori, Caponsachi, Cavalcanti, Circuli, Corbizzi, Foraboschi, Girolami, Nerli, Pigli, Pulci, and Serragli came to have modest, almost inconsequential, holdings in the funded communal debt.[136] In their stead families only recently become politically eminent

[134] Cf. *Monte* (1347), S. Giovanni, fols. 434r, 489, 496r, 510, 734, 1000r–4. Each of these *novi cives* improved his holdings in the funded debt by astronomical percentages. For example, Goggio purchased over 1,600 florins between the years 1343 and 1347, while Renzi was assigned numerous credits from defunct Florentine companies which totaled almost 2,300 florins. Other prominent *novi cives* from this quarter who furnished capital to the *camera* were members of the Azzuccii, Arrighi, Bonizi, Ferrantini, Fiorentini, Maffei, and Vai families.

[135] *Ibid.,* S. Croce, fols. 722r–33.

[136] This radical alteration in the structure of the creditor class was not confined to a single quarter of the city. Very few of the once great Buondelmonti continued to have substantial holdings in the funded debt. Cf. *ibid.,* S. Maria Novella, f. 881r. Individual Gianfigliazzi continued to have sizable holdings, but the family's share in the total was negligible. *Ibid.,* f. 934. Both the Della Tosa and the Donati shareholders remained ubiquitous, but in each case only one member of the clan held over 100 florins in government credits. Cf. *ibid.,* S. Giovanni, *passim.* The great *contado* nobility of course counted for very little in terms of their ability to advance the *camera* necessary funds. For the modest holdings of the Squarcialupi and Volognano see *ibid.,* S. Croce, fols. 300–15.

emerged as the mainstay of the communal budget. The holdings of the Asini family loom especially large—close to 20,000 florins. This house made repeated *prestanze* to the *camera* and purchased the shares of bankrupt companies and impecunious magnates.[137] Particularly notable was the rise of the Buonarroti family, who were among the first of the new houses to fill the office of prior in the earliest popular signory. Not only were their holdings in the *Monte* sizable, but their contribution to the budget of the beleaguered *camera* mounted until in 1357 their *prestanze* exceeded 1,600 florins.[138] No clan new to the arena of Florentine politics became more closely involved in communal finance than the Rinuccini. This house, with its shares in the *Monte,* continued to advance capital to the signory while at the same time purchasing many of the outstanding credits of the Bardi, Gherardini, Uzzano, and others. Once again we observe a trend: old families like the Villani (including the chronicler himself) were compelled to liquidate substantial holdings as well as to obtain reductions in their tax assessments. Their *Monte* shares dwindled, and the Villani, Buonaccorsi (partners of the Villani), Acciaiuoli, Antella, Bardi, Corsini, Del Bene, Orlandini, Peruzzi, and 300 other Florentine business establishments found themselves no longer able to serve as mainstays of the communal budget. The contributions of a new generation of financiers, manufacturers, and entrepreneurs had become an indispensable staple to the treasury. By the 1350's the loans of the Baruccii, Sandro and Agnolo, totaled over 700 florins annually, and the *prestanze* of the prosperous used-clothing dealer, Zanobio Bartoli, was not far behind. The Bellandi, Bianciardi, and Bonafati were typical of the many *novi cives* who became prominent in guild life and politically active in the polis. Their contributions to the public fisc averaged 500 florins annually by the 1350's. So many of these new clans were matriculated in the *Cambio* that the complexion of the latter, along with the prestigious *Lana,* was profoundly altered. The failures and bankruptcies of 1343–46 and the onset of plague certainly encouraged economic mobility, which in turn prompted the rise of new men to high public offices.[139]

[137] *Ibid., passim.* For yet others who are making extensive loans to the treasury over these years see *CCE,* XLVII, f. 154. There we find new families such as the Fantini, Ghandi, Lapozzi, Lupini, Nelli, Villanova.

[138] Cf. *Monte,* CLXXXI, f. 112r.

[139] It should also be observed at this point that the election laws were most favorable to the entry of the newer elements, since a special leather bag called "una borsa di spicciolati" was created, containing the names of those whom a chronicler referred to as "gente di famiglie piccole." Whenever the men of the "famiglie grosse" or "di consorteria" were declared ineligible for a communal post, a name was extracted from the *borsa di spicciolati.* This is a crucial but neglected point. Cf. D. Velluti, *Cronica* pp. 167, 192–93.

After 1343 the leaders of the *novi cives*—selected from the upper echelons of manufacturers, bankers, and traffickers in domestic goods and services—were also creditors of the commune. In addition to propping the public fisc they soon gained the confidence of many of their social superiors, with whom they had more in common than with the artisans and shopkeepers of the city.

Marco di Benvenuto, a soap manufacturer, who played a crucial role in the inauguration of the far-reaching legislative reforms of 1372, was a top rate-payer in his quarter.[140] Pace Brunetti, a leading leather merchant, who also participated in the 1372 reforms, made loans to the commune totaling 250 florins.[141] Niccolo Delli's son, a grocer and member of the special commission of Ten (*Dieci della Libertà*) who were given sweeping powers in 1372, was a man of great affluence and had been elected to the priorate on several occasions.[142] Tommaso Dini, a prominent member of the signory, was one of the new elite who engaged in international trade as a partner in one of the great companies.[143] Giovanni Dini, a druggist and importer of spices, was active in the government throughout the seventies and became one of the "Eight Saints," who guided the republic in its desperate war against the Holy See; he was knighted for his service by *il popolo* in 1378. He and his confreres were commended by Machiavelli for caring more about their country than the welfare of their own souls.[144] The vintner, Valeriano Dolcibene, importer and exporter, twice holder of a seat in the priorate during the 1350's, speculated heavily in *Monte* shares and made extensive loans to the Florentine treasury.[145] Tellino Dini, an ironmonger, was a frequent participant in legislative debates, engaged in foreign trade, and specialized in the acquisition of *Monte* shares. His tax assessments and those of his heirs ranged between twenty-five and fifty florins a year; in addition, he also made sizable loans to the treasury. In the 1350's and 1360's, when Florence was in need of funds, he loaned the city no less than 601 florins. His political career began with his election to the priorate; he was subsequently appointed treasurer of the tax on wine, official over communal property, syndic in charge of fortifications and walls, and finally ambassador to the city of Siena. He was one of the principal advisers to the signory throughout

[140] *CCE,* CCXX, f. 17; *P,* LX, f. 48.
[141] *CCE,* LXVIII, f. 132r; *Estimo,* CCCVII, f. 2.
[142] *P,* LX, f. 1, and LXIV, f. 129; *CP,* V, f. 108r; XI, f. 106.
[143] S. Peruzzi, *Storia del commercio e dei banchieri di Firenze* (Florence: 1868), p. 221; *CP,* I, Part II, f. 72; *ibid.,* unnumbered folio (Nov. 24, 1356).
[144] *P,* LX, f. 148; *LF,* XL, f. 52.
[145] S. Peruzzi, *op. cit.,* p. 122; *CCE,* CLXXXIV, unnumbered folio; *Monte,* CCCXXXIX, f. 88; CCCCXLI, f. 80.

this period; in 1354 he spoke on the crucial question of anti-Ghibelline legislation and the related problem of the *divieto*. His proposals were essentially moderate and in accord with those of certain patrician speakers. The following year he advised the signory to modify the treaty with the Holy Roman Empire so that the city of Florence might remain free. One again his judgment coincided with that of many patricians. In the ensuing years he allied with such eminent Florentines as Uguccione Ricci and Berto Frescobaldi in opposing measures detrimental to the mercantile patriciate. By arguing against an alliance with the papal legate in the 1360's, he was in agreement with other *novi cives* as well as the powerful Ricci family.[146] One of the wealthiest of the new men from the San Giovanni section of the city, Giovanni Goggio, a dealer in used clothing and an importer of grain, also counseled against an alliance. This frequently consulted government adviser had reasons for his stand identical with those of *novi cives* and Ricci alike: Close ties with the church would only serve to threaten Milan, and the lords of that city would inevitably take military reprisals against the Florentines.[147] Similar sentiments were expressed by Recco Guazza, one of the main props of the patrician reformers from 1372 to 1378; he was an enthusiastic supporter of the radical proposals of that rugged individualist of Florentine politics, the aristocrat Filippo di Cionetto Bastari. Guazza also championed important measures calculated to undermine the authority of the Tuscan church and to destroy the political influence of the great Albizzi clan; in this he followed the lead of such eminent patricians as Tommaso di Marco Strozzi, Andrea di messer Francesco Salviati, Andrea di Veri Rondinelli, and Salvestro de' Medici.[148] Maso di Neri, one of the top rate payers of his quarter and a rope maker whose family had only recently

[146] *Monte,* CCCCXXXVI, f. 2r; *LF,* XXXI, f. 5r; *P,* XLIV, f. 111r; *LF,* XXXIX, f. 246; *P,* XLII, f. 104r; XLVII, f. 123; *CCE,* LXXXIV, f. 9r; *Estimo,* CCCVII, f. 40r; *CCE,* LXIX, f. 125r; *Diplomatico,* Opera S. Maria del Fiore (undated); *CCE,* CLXXXIV, unnumbered folio (Aug. 12, 1378); *Prestanze,* CCCLXVII, f. 15; *CP,* Vol. I, *passim;* II, f. 85; III, fols. 51, 71, 113r; IV, fols. 103r, 113; V, fols. 6, 24r, 118r.

[147] S. Peruzzi, *op. cit.,* p. 222; *CCE,* LXXVII, f. 146r; *Estimo,* CCCVII, f. 50; CCCLV, f. 24; *Monte* of 1345. S. Maria Novella, f. 494; *P,* XLII, f. 104; *LF,* XL, f. 56; *CP,* III, fols. 3r, 17r, 27r.

[148] *Ibid.,* XII, fols. 3, 10r–11; *P,* LXIV, f. 17; *LF,* XL, f. 230; Stefani, rub. 881–83; N. Rodolico, *I Ciompi* (Florence: 1945), p. 188; D. Marzi, *La cancelleria della repubblica fiorentina* (Rocca S. Casciano: 1910), p. 100. Technically, Guazza does not qualify as one of the *novi cives* since his family sat in the signory at the end of the *trecento.* He is included, however, because he, like other Florentines, belonged to families who had been out of public life for over a half century. It is in this sense, then, that his family can be considered *nouveau.* I wish to thank Professor Gene Brucker of the University of California for calling my attention to this fact.

migrated from the *contado;* Andrea Niccolini, a wealthy hosier; Schiatta di Ricco, a leading pork butcher and exporter of leather goods; Matteo Federigo Soldi, seven times holder of the office of prior and another of the "Eight Saints," as well as the wealthiest vintner in Florence; Ricco Taldi, a coopersmith and frequent participant in communal debates; and the politically active Andrea Villani, an affluent trader in dyes, are representative of that large group of new men who gained the reputation for being responsible citizens and trustworthy political allies.[149]

The *novi cives,* then, warmly espoused public authority as a restraint against the entrenched strength of the great families who tended to be a law unto themselves, and legislation enacted under their aegis reflects this deep concern. It is from precisely this impulse that the stern paideia came into being. The newcomers were anxious to curb the lawlessness of the *potentes* so that the inhabitants of city and *contado* might live in peace and tranquility. In 1346 two artisans spoke on behalf of such legislation when they asked that *potentes* be prohibited from contracting marriages with families of any foreign prince, lord, or baron, since such an alliance would increase their status. Further, any offspring from such a noble union would be automatically barred from exercising any jurisdiction and required to pay the heavy fine of 1000 florins.[150] The government also fixed severe penalties against any patrician who lawlessly usurped ecclesiastical property.[151] The following year the doublet maker Domenico Dante counseled the enactment of a provision canceling the permission to bear arms, formerly granted by the commune to certain great families, because of the "lamentations" of the citizenry concerning the terrible violence committed against them daily by the *potentes.*[152]

If we pursue this trend beyond the terminal date of this study, we discover that in 1352 several "peace-loving populares" presented a petition that was seconded by two notaries new to the Florentine political scene. It asked that any commoner who behaved in a lawless manner be declared a magnate by a vote of the signory and the captains of the

[149] S. Peruzzi, *op. cit.,* p. 221; Stefani, rub. 787; *P,* LXIV, f. 129; *CCE,* LXXVII, f. 151r; *Prestanze,* CCCLXIX, f. 65r (Maso di Neri). Stefani, rub. 738; *P,* LX, f. 1; *LF,* XL, f. 278; *Monte,* CCL, f. 6; F. Perrens, *Histoire de Florence* (Paris: 1877–83), IV, 523 (Andrea Niccolini). S. Peruzzi, *op. cit.,* p. 219; *CP,* IV, f. 8; X, f. 114; *LF,* XXXIII, f. 5r; XXXVIII, f. 27 (Schiatta di Ricco). Stefani, rub. 701, 752; *CCE,* LXXXVII, f. 89; *P,* XLIX, f. 135r (Matteo Federigo Soldi). *CP,* VIII, fols. 12, 17; *LF,* XL, f. 36; *CP,* XIV, f. 18r (Ricco Taldi). S. Peruzzi, *op. cit.,* p. 222; *P,* LX, f. 148; *Prestanze,* LXXXII, f. 3 (Andrea Villani).

[150] *PD,* VI, f. 144.

[151] *P,* XXXIII, f. 18r.

[152] *PD,* VII, f. 66r.

twenty-one guilds (two-thirds of whom were *novi cives*). To make a citizen a magnate was to deprive him of many of his political rights. For example, he was not to be permitted to sit in the signory or hold other critical posts. The petition was amended and enacted with the preamble that ". . . in order to conserve and defend the liberty and innocence of the commoners, the poor, the weak and the clergy," those who were convicted under the law were not only deprived of high office but were not permitted to live in the same section of the city as their kinsmen.[153] The threat of vendetta or reprisal by the relatives of lawless Florentines encouraged the government to take steps to weaken the *consorteria* of the powerful clans. In 1361 further inroads were made into the authority of the great families by a law compelling all those who had formerly been classed as *magnati* but whose legal status had been transformed by action of the signory to that of *popolani* to appear before the priorate and renounce their *consorteria*. Florentines whose status had been altered in this way were not to be permitted to hold office in the signory for two decades.[154] Other severe measures were taken to reduce the influence of the patriciate over the communal courts. For example, anyone seeking dispensation from a verdict of these tribunals was obliged to present a petition that required a three-fourths vote of the signory for approval and a two-thirds vote of the communal councils.[155] Legislation of this type was implemented by directives issued by the signory to the judiciary that sentences were not to be suspended, and special officials were elected to enforce this mandate.[156] The coopersmith Guido Pizzini, the doublet makers Augustino Cocchi and Francesco Buonaiuto, the furrier Piero Neri del Zancha, the grocer Giovanni Dini, and the hosier Andrea Niccolini were but a few of the many *novi cives* who enthusiastically battled for the supremacy of communal law against the time-honored prerogatives of the patriciate.

The *novi cives* had warmly supported the Ordinances of Justice, which increased the penalties on lawless nobles and required them to post bond for good behavior. You will remember that one of the first measures taken by the popular signory of 1343 was to restore these "most fortunate ordinances," which had been abrogated by the preceding regime. The government was also much concerned with their vigorous enforcement.[157] In 1349 the wine merchant Federigo Soldi, the notary Ser Jacobo Gher-

[153] *P*, XXXIX, f. 192.
[154] *P*, LXVIII, f. 164.
[155] *P*, XLIII, f. 1.
[156] *LF*, XXXVI, f. 6; XXXIV, f. 31.
[157] *P*, XXXII, f. 73; Stefani, rubs. 607, 616–17.

ardi, and three other new men, Jacobo Mezze, Francesco Benin, and Puccio Carletti, favored extending the liability for any crime committed by a member of a noble house to kinsmen as distant as the sixth degree.[158] The hosier Augustino Cocchi spoke in behalf of legislation requiring all nobles who desired to serve abroad first to obtain the permission of the government.[159] The notary Ser Piero Guccio supported a proposal to reinstitute the practice of permitting commoners to deposit secret denunciations against lawless *magnati* in a special box affixed to the door of the court of the Executor of Justice.[160] Spokesmen for the colleges favored the exaction of special taxes to be levied against the nobility of the *contado* and, in the company of Recco Guazza, suggested that this class be compelled to increase their bond.[161] There was particular suspicion of certain noble families who had a long and dishonorable history of disloyalty to the republic as well as acts of violence and brigandage. By a provision of the signory and the councils, the Adimari, Bostichi, Della Tosa, Donati, Gherardini, Giandonati, Rossi, and Visdomini families were singled out for special retribution.[162] At the same time certain members of less powerful and more law-abiding noble houses were permitted to renounce their status and enroll in the ranks of the commoners in order to avoid the restraints imposed upon *magnati*. By a special decree of the popular regime in October of 1343, 530 Florentine nobles had been permitted to change their class affiliation.[163] This practice was continued, and in the summer of 1349 an extraordinary commission was appointed by the signory to select magnates worthy of commoner status. Many of these new *popolani* changed their names, separated themselves from their consorts, and relinquished their coats of arms; yet popular distrust persisted.[164] In 1371 two *novi cives,* Bernardino Cini Bartolini and Ser Nigio ser Giovanni, seconded a proposal to extend the political disabilities imposed upon former *magnati*.[165] By taking these measures the signory was able to reduce the numbers of the nobility, set strict limits upon the political participation of former members of this class, weaken dynastic ties, and at the same time buttress communal prerogatives. This trend was inten-

[158] *CP,* I, Part 1, f. 5.
[159] *LF,* XXIV, f. 20.
[160] This measure was designed to prevent crimes by nobles against "libertatem et statum popularium." The magnate Piero Foraboschi spoke against its adoption. Cf. *P,* XLVIII, f. 30.
[161] *CP,* I, Part 2, f. 130r; VI, f. 118.
[162] *P,* XXXVII, f. 99; *LF,* XXX, f. 46.
[163] Stefani, rub. 595; G. Villani, XII, 23.
[164] Stefani, rub. 748; *P,* XL, f. 39.
[165] *P,* LVIII, f. 164.

sified during the 1370's, when the *novi cives* played an even larger role in communal politics. By the summer of 1378 it became a frontal assault that divested the magnates (anachronistically referred to as "milites") of other ancient rights and destroyed the effective force of their clan ties.[166]

# IX

The interval between 1343 and 1348 marks the beginning of a generation of popular reform and oligarchical reaction. The course of civic life was far from smooth; sometimes the very foundations of the polis were in danger. While this period of reform in Florentine history had much in common with others we have considered, its ethos and its consequences differ quantitatively if not qualitatively. Of longer duration and grounded in the "new society," these latter-day reforms were to prove both politically and culturally durable. They culminated in the creation of the Renaissance territorial state on the one hand and encouraged the dissipation of the gentle paideia on the other.

To speak about the ethos from which this type of reform movement draws its vitality is to raise questions that can be treated only impressionistically. That men promote the victory of public law over matters that were formerly private or guild concerns implies an interest in a more unitary political system. Underlying this political system is the presumption that through the vehicle of communal law the area of public moral concern can be extended. Matters formerly dealt with by church, *magnati, Parte Guelfa,* and *consorteria* now are considered by elected officials. The pluralistic civic structure of the commune, with its conglomeration of jurisdictions and immunities, gives way to something much more cohesive which can best be described as a "territorial state." The signory of 1343 sought to strengthen public law through a government of the twenty-one guilds which disregarded certain traditional private claims for deferential treatment. It had been the captains of the twenty-one guilds, two-thirds of whom were *novi cives,* who had presented the two petitions responsible for the enactment of the harsh communal laws against ecclesiastical liberties in 1345 and 1346. Later it was by petition of the selfsame captains that the sternest proposal in communal history to be directed against "personal government" was made into law: Only by unanimous vote of the signory could a judicial verdict be canceled or a ban be revoked. Moreover, we find these leaders of the republic's

[166] *Balie.* XVI, fols. 2r–6; *P,* LXVI, f. 51; *LF,* XL, f. 298.

*arti* in the vanguard of those who championed enforcement of the strictest penalties against any who violated communal regulations concerning a variety of matters, from the bearing of false witness, to the pursuit of illegal vendetta. Especially marked for reprisal were those whose high status had only recently been a passport to immunity as well as a badge of honor.[167]

Communal society was democratized to the extent that the clergy, the magnates, and even the guilds were brought under communal jurisdiction. The government became more impartial, and impersonal criteria replaced the ancient claims of status and family influence. Moreover, the signory assumed responsibility for the disposition of various questions hitherto under ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The prosecution or nonprosecution of heretics and punishment or licensing of pawnbrokers are cases in point. By dealing with these problems state tribunals and communal councils extended the republic's prerogatives until she was sole arbiter of many controversial issues.[168] The extension and regulation of Florentine authority in the countryside are another manifestation of the same trend.

If we take the word "puritanism" to mean the fundamental identity between private and public morality—and we suggest that the men of 1343, driven by circumstance and conviction, founded a regime that was essentially puritanical—then we can come closer to sensing the motivation at the core of this popular revolution. This energy expressed itself in the remarkable reconstruction of state finances which culminated with that imaginative *tour de force,* the institution of the *Monte.* But much more subtle was the expression of Florentine puritanism in other byways of communal life. Many political movements can be characterized by an abiding faith in the efficacy of public law and yet be far removed from the ethos of puritanism. It is the strenuous attempt to make private morality conform to the dictates of public law that enables us to speak legitimately of a puritannical Florence.

[167] Compare the many pardons, dispensations, and cancellation of condemnations so rampant over the first years of the *trecento* with the stringency so evident after 1343. If we take a single volume of the *provvisioni* (Vol. XIII), covering only the year 1307, we would find at least 100 instances of just such practices. Nor would there be any appreciable difference if we selected any other volume.

[168] Over the next years we would witness a steady decline in the authority of guild courts as well as ecclesiastical tribunals. Moreover, there would be a perceptible shift in the nature of the obligations of rural inhabitants. What had earlier been regarded as personal would now tend to become territorial, so that rural communes and *popoli* would assume responsibility for payment of delinquent taxes into the *camera.* Cf. *CCE,* Vol. X (Jan., 1345); *ibid.,* Vol. XXX (May, 1347).

This period most closely resembles the era of Savonarola, with its enthusiasm for legislated morality. Like the Dominican a century and a half later, the signory inaugurated a program of strict enforcement of communal sumptuary laws. In October of 1343 it decreed that all women were required to register all gaudy apparel with the state notary, and the courts were enjoined to prosecute those who continued to adorn themselves with "such vanities." Gone were the easier days of the late thirties and early forties when those who had been convicted of violations of the republic's sumptuary laws were able to purchase judicial dispensation for a few lire. Now, beginning in November and December of 1343, the records of the communal treasury are replete with condemnations on this charge. The wives of Alberti, Bardi, Medici, Pazzi, and others were compelled to pay heavy penalties, sometimes as high as 100 florins. The officer charged with enforcement had a veritable army of bailiffs. Not only were he and his retainers responsible for arresting those who wore gaudy apparel and forbidden ornaments, but they were also instructed to seize all tailors, jewelers, and other purveyors of prohibited adornments. Furthermore, they were charged with punishing anyone who bestowed a gift valued above a fixed amount. Finally, the bailiffs were enjoined to condemn any householder who organized a feast or held a wedding ceremony to which more than a specified number of guests were invited.[169]

Gone, too, were the more tolerant attitudes reflected in the gentler paideia towards the evils of prostitution. In the autumn of 1343, communal bailiffs armed with whips drove women from the brothels onto the streets, where they were ridiculed and jeered at by the populace. Communal courts exacted heavy fines from those who persisted in their ancient profession; this time, however, judicial dispensation, remission and pardon were not forthcoming. Soon statutes were enacted requiring that the *Podestà* of the city arrest any prostitute who walked outside the prescribed area in the daytime without her new symbol of infamy—a lighted candle.[170]

Convictions on charges of adultery and sodomy were a commonplace; houses where these illicit acts took place were burned to the ground and their perpetrators were no longer to be beneficiaries of communal largesse in the form of a remission. This was indeed a far cry from the laissez-faire morality of a few years past. Morever, after 1343 marked efforts were

[169] R. Rodacanachi, *La femme italienne avant, pendant et après la renaissance* (Paris: 1922), pp. 335–47. Cf. also *CCE,* Vols. III to XXX.

[170] U. Dorini, *Il diritto penale e la delinquenza in Firenze nel secolo XIV* (Lucca: 1916), pp. 70–72.

made to clarify and render explicit legal definitions for such statutory offenses as adultery, incest, and sexual perversion. Fully one-half of all accusations on these counts resulted in conviction. Later, conviction for sodomy required only the testimony of a single witness, fourteen years of age or older.[171] As part of the general movement towards stricter surveillance of private life, we observe an increase of some 50 per cent in the communal police force after 1348—despite a 30 per cent decline in population owing to the plague.[172]

This puritan *élan* affected the protohumanistic outlook of Giotto's generation. The last of the master's followers, Maso di Banco, disappeared from the scene in the early 1340's, and the younger painters turned to Orcagna and Nardo. It would seem that the harsher morality of the new signory not only created an environment unsympathetic to the growth of naturalism in art but that the political changes in Florence brought to the fore a new audience whose tastes in fresco painting were traditional in that they preferred the ritualistic over the newer protohumanistic narrative forms. The *novi cives,* according to Petrarch, were incapable of appreciating a narrative artist such as Giotto who painted *au naturale.*[173] How hopefully he had blended the real and sacred world with life-size figures experiencing lifelike emotion. Giotto's confident optimism in man's potential achievements had made him the first to paint picture-cycles glorifying antique heroes. His was an art that embraced the gentle paideia with its emphasis upon the accessibility of virtue and spirituality to striving men.

The new signory sponsored such puritanical Augustinians as Fra Simone Fidati, who exhorted artists to repress the natural emotions, animation, and spontaneity of their figures in favor of formal and ritualistic composition.[174] The artists of the mid-*trecento* did indeed create figures that were

[171] *Ibid.,* pp. 72–74. In the Statute of the Podestà (1355) this magistrate is given full authority to make inquiry in cases involving such a charge "sive per famam sive per presumptionem sive per tormentia vel alio modo."

[172] *Ibid.,* pp. 204–5. This increase parallels the general growth of communal bureaucracy over the second half of the fourteenth century and suggests something of the dramatic augmentation of public authority.

[173] For the appropriate quotation from Petrarch's will, see M. Meiss, *op. cit.,* p. 71, n. 50. Cf. also *Decameron,* VI, 5.

[174] Cf. M. Becker, "Florentine Politics and the Diffusion of Heresy in the Trecento," *Speculum,* pp. 68–69. This article follows F. Tocco's dating of the delivery of Simone's sermons. For a discussion of the influence of the Augustinian's thought upon contemporary Florentine art, see M. Meiss,, *op. cit.,* p. 26. Even more important is the influence of the Dominican, Jacopo Passavanti (1302–57). His sermons stand as a spiritual antithesis to Cavalca's hopeful pronouncements concerning the bonds of love between man and man, and man and his creator. Cf. M. Aurigemma, *Saggio sul Passavanti* (Florence: 1957).

aloof and self-contained. No longer did their subjects seek to communicate their deep emotions, but, as Millard Meiss has pointed out, deeply stirred feelings smoldered behind their rigid masks.[175] Were these the emotions that were to find expression in the puritan equalitarianism of the Spiritual Franciscans, the religious fervor of the War of the Eight Saints, and the democratic zeal of the Ciompi revolutionaries of 1378?[176]

[175] M. Meiss, *op. cit.*, pp. 15–16; R. Salvini, *L'Arte di Agnolo Gaddi* (Florence: 1936), pp. 1–7, 170–72.

[176] In a subsequent volume I shall treat the relationship between communal politics and Florentine culture from the Black Death in 1348 to the closing years of the *trecento*.

# EPILOGUE

It was to be the great work of the regimes after 1343, culminating in the formation of the territorial state of the late *trecento,* that repressed recalcitrant patrician, obdurate magnate, and overly expansive corporate bodies. In the course of this process traditional forms of government intimately associated with the era of the medieval commune dissolved, while successive regimes replaced private immunities with public law.

Out of this experience emerged a cohesive aristocracy quite different from the patriciate of the communal age. They were concerned with the procedures of communal finance, the techniques of diplomatic maneuver, and the conduct of the interminable wars of the early *quattrocento.* Sedition and violence were more sporadic than formerly, and the disputes between *optimates* centered around the management of the funded communal debt or the extent to which the signory should sponsor mercantilistic programs. The ties of *consorteria* and even of guild slackened, and an intimate nexus developed among the great oligarchs, who were now virtually stockholders in a giant corporation called the state. They were joined in this partnership by the most affluent of the *novi cives.* Less and less was the signory forced to play its great medieval role of peacemaker. The canopy of law, bureaucracy, and public power spread increasingly over private lives. Swarms of treasury officers and judicial officials entered state service during the mid-*trecento,* so that within a generation Florentine bureaucracy had increased threefold, with a corresponding increase in power. Further, the same men tended to continue in office throughout their adult lives. Regularization of political procedure contributed to the efficiency of law enforcement. Judicial dispensation and annulment of sentences eventually became rarities in the less permissive world of the new polis.

If one subscribes to Burckhardt's vitalistic, rationalistic historiographi-

cal approach to the Renaissance, together with his commitment to an interior ideal unity of historical personality as the hallmark in defining the ethos of this era, then the taming of the Florentine magnate and the exercise of political pressure upon high-born burgher to conform to the norms of law loom significant. To argue that Renaissance Florence is characterized in part by the citizen's discovery of his persona or ego is to suggest that what came to be unveiled was a new self-consciousness of will and personality. In other words the individual approached society in a new guise. To capture this self-consciousness, one must attempt to recognize and understand the kind of presuppositions with which the individual approached himself.

In the interval of Florentine experience we have considered before 1343, the fused patriciate (part burgher, part magnate) failed to furnish leadership for a variety of reasons. As a consequence, confidence in government, with its reliance upon exhortation, admonition, and political magnanimity, ebbed. In addition the recent disastrous results of the Florentine flirtation with despotism dissuaded citizens from ever attempting such an experiment again. With the political pendulum no longer swinging so freely from oligarchy to despotism, democratized rule that exalted the power and majesty of communal law came into being. This popular signory is to be less responsive to the perquisites and prerogatives of privileged citizenry and venerated medieval orders and institutions. The implication, then, is that the development of the persona or citizen ego as well as the cultivation of citizen perspective will acquire a new creative and resilient adaptability. Not only was the *bonus civis* required to suppress all proclivities for violence, but he was expected to demonstrate an intense concern for the life and welfare of the polis. If he was to compete he had to direct his ambition according to the norms of a burgeoning civic humanism rather than to the promptings of a chivalric code or a Christian ethic of individual *renovatio*. Essentially, therefore, 1343 marks the firm beginnings of the extension of the imperatives of collectivity over the impulses of the magnate individual, the privileged corporate body, or the venerable, semiautonomous institution. Thus the "repressive" aspect of civic life in Florence after 1343 should be accorded a slightly different emphasis than that lent to the Italian experience by the most celebrated of Renaissance historians. Jacob Burckhardt, in his masterpiece *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy,* may well have underestimated the role of public law in tightening the bonds of society. We have observed the role played by *novi cives* in asserting the primacy

of the public world over private interests. It remains, however, to sketch briefly the part played by the mounting public debt in creating a stronger, more durable political form to replace the medieval commune. To rephrase Burckhardt, the emerging Renaissance state was not so much a work of art as an inadvertent by-product of the assertion of rights by *novi cives* and the exigencies of mounting public debt. We have seen that from just under 50,000 florins in the early *trecento* this debt rose almost twentyfold over a generation. By the 1360's the total was more than 1,000,000 florins and more than 2,000,000 in the next decade. In 1400 it stood at 3,000,000 florins, and just two generations later it reached the grand total of 8,000,000. Such a series of giant leaps did irreparable damage to traditional medieval political and economic structures. New allegiances and bonds were created; private interests diminished in the face of a mounting concern with state affairs. In pre-1343 communal society the church, the magnates, the confraternities, the Guelf party, and above all the great guilds with their affluent member bankers and industrialists, had provided capital and credit. Until the mid-*trecento* money and credit were almost exclusively controlled by these orders and medieval corporations, for the commune had little wealth. By the early fifteenth century, however, the state had become the largest consumer of capital, and a rentier class had invested heavily in the interest-bearing public debt. After the early 1340's the private system of multiple economies—lay and ecclesiastical—evolved toward the formation of a unitary public fiscal structure. The management of the debt affected not only the fortunes of the citizenry but the well-being of the Florentine business community, which was using *Monte* shares as negotiable instruments. But this is the stuff of another volume.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

# BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Since the publication of the first volume of Robert Davidsohn's *Geschichte von Florenz* in 1896, interest in medieval Florentine history has steadily increased. This book was the first to employ, somewhat systematically, the vast riches of the extensive Tuscan archives. It suggested the abundant possibilities for a sensitive portrayal of Florentine history if the materials could be utilized skillfully. Gino Capponi, in his *Storia della repubblica di Firenze* (3 vols.; Florence, 1876), and F. Perrens, in his *Histoire de Florence depuis ses origines jusqu'à la domination des Médicis* (6 vols.; Paris, 1877–83), had already written lengthily and well on varied aspects of Florentine political life, but too frequently these authors had used documentary evidence only as an embellishment to the narrative of chroniclers. Davidsohn worked for almost four decades from this seemingly inexhaustible treasure trove of materials to construct the scaffolding for an interpretation that would rival the one only recently erected by his hero Gregorovius for medieval Rome. Anyone who subsequently entered the cultivated fields of Florentine communal history would readily acknowledge an abiding obligation to that energetic surveyor, Davidsohn. Further, it was the efforts of this indefatigable scholar that freed the study of medieval Florentine history from the control of those who attempted to cover it with the gaudy flag of nineteenth-century patriotism or, even more damaging, to cast it in the mold of the racial myth emphasizing the antithesis between the blood of the Teuton and that of the Latin. Instead of following these flamboyant impulses, Davidsohn sought to create a rational framework. He stressed the role of material interests. There was of course abundant economic evidence on such questions as the rise and decline of the Florentine nobility or the weakening of Ghibelline ties and the strengthening of the Guelf union in Tuscany. He could argue effectively that the growing commercial bonds between Pope and Kingdom of Naples on the one hand and Florentine bankers and merchants on the other was a prime socioeconomic factor altering the features of the late Florentine medieval commune. When such an analysis is hardened into explanatory principle or methodological device, however, it can frequently lead to a superficial description of personal psychology and general culture. When Davidsohn regards the proclamation of the Jubilee Year of 1300 as an economic trick performed by a cynical Pope to the plaudits of a superstitious world, then his method is caricatured.[1]

[1] See E. Sestan, "Roberto Davidsohn e la sua storia di Firenze," for an extensive historiographical discussion of these questions. Published in the first volume of the Italian translation of Davidsohn's history (Florence: 1957), I, 19–48.

There is much that could be said concerning the many successes and the few failures of this monumental work, with its information-packed *Forschungen.* For present purposes it might be sufficient to indicate that Davidsohn was sometimes incapable of appreciating medieval values since he was steeped in nineteenth-century liberalism with its prejudice against the feudal nobility, scholasticism, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy. It was this unwavering commitment, in the opinion of a recent critic, Ernesto Sestan, that made his entry into the medieval realm of ideals and motives so difficult. Since his psychology was simplistic and ultrarational, this realm seemed to him rampant with superstition and not a little childlike. Lacking empathy for the medieval, his descriptions of Florentine culture tended sometimes to be replete with value judgments pronounced in editorial rhetoric. The failure to appreciate the emotions at the heart of an action occasionally made his writing into a catalogue of names and a listing of events. Thus his view of culture is that of a collector rather than an investigator, additive rather than interpretive. Finally, although he intended to continue his multivolume history through the Ciompi revolution (1382), his narrative concludes in 1329–30.

The dialectical explanations of Gaetano Salvemini in his several important works on Florentine history, written between 1896 and 1901, are far more penetrating than the jejune observations of Davidsohn. In fact, the latter soon utilized certain of these theories in the later volumes of his own *Geschichte von Florenz.* For Salvemini one of the fundamental postulates of communal political experience was the stern and inexorable contest between city and countryside. Rulers of the polis, urban industrialists, and bankers ruthlessly exploited the rural proprietors. Cruel tax burdens and a relentless program of restriction on the export of grain served to place staggering burdens upon the potential of the countryside. In his most celebrated work, *Magnati e popolani in Firenze dal 1280 al 1292* (Florence, 1899), Salvemini identifies those who wanted strict regulation of the grain trade as the *popolani grassi* of the city. They were also the formulators of the exploitive tributary system. This new haute bourgeoisie of Florence were arrayed against the great magnates of Tuscany, whose patrimony was largely invested in rural real estate. Further, he compartmentalizes the chivalric spirit and the mercantile environment, failing to see the extent to which they interpenetrate. Finally, this penchant for duality leads to the overly logical separation of the profane and the secular sacred in the medieval world. It is not surprising, therefore, that his description of the contest between church and state is a mechanical one. Like Davidsohn he opted for the rational psychology appropriate to men pursuing economic interests. So, too, he saw the intellectual struggles of the late Middle Ages as those of reasonable men against the minions of superstition. He, too, had an anticlerical bias.[2]

Although Salvemini's views on relations between city and *contado* were challenged by subsequent historians, especially his emphasis on exploitation, certain aspects of his position may be defensible. The question of the effect and indeed the extent of communal taxation on rural holdings remains worthy of exploration. Even more fundamental for modern scholars is his very early work on knighthood in Florence, *La dignità cavalleresca nel comune di Firenze* (Florence. 1896). This is a monograph that has continued to be influential from the time of the publication of Davidsohn's fourth volume of the *Geschichte* until the most

[2] Cf. also E. Sestan, "Salvemini Storico e Maestro," *Rivista Storica Italiana,* LXX (1958), 5–19.

recent articles of Enrico Fiumi, which have been appearing regularly in the *Archivio Storico Italiano* from 1957 to the present. However, this past year J. Hyde in his *Padua in the Age of Dante* (New York, 1966), while extensively utilizing *La dignità,* indicated that Salvemini failed to realize that after the mid-fourteenth century the tendency in Florence was for the commune itself to create distinct orders of knighthood. In this way chivalry was incorporated in the life of the polis. Such an observation is particularly relevant for my study, since one of the principal motifs of Volume Two will be the emergence of the Florentine commune as a force for conferring status and dignity on its citizens.

For the purpose of the present study, the numerous insights of A. Doren in his many works from *Die florentiner Wollentuchindustrie vom 14. bis zum 16. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart, 1901) to *Italienishe Wirtschaftageschichte* (Jena, 1934) can be reduced to the following general statement: The period from the late 1290's to the 1330's was one of transition and of oscillation between the political needs of the commune and the particularistic tendencies of the greater guilds. This most thorough of investigators into the mountains of guild records observes that commencing with the early 1330's, centralizing forces reduced guild autonomy until these corporate bodies became subordinate to the signory. From the vantage point of the present study, this observation could be substantiated if the date for this development were advanced by a single decade. In other words, it would be under the aegis of the popular government after 1343 that the favored treatment traditionally afforded the guilds was first challenged. Although Doren is not concerned with the reasons for the onset of this decline, his studies furnish ample evidence, especially from the statutes of the *arti,* of a connection between the intensification of political and economic crisis on the one hand and the start of the withering away of guild powers on the other.

Doren calls attention to the importance of the guilds for the formation of the Florentine Ordinances of Justice in 1293. He also underscores their role in public finance. He does not, however, indicate that in proportion to the total communal budget their contribution was moderate indeed. Doren's effort to integrate the life of the guilds into the over-all fabric of the late medieval-Renaissance world is particularly disturbing; by their very nature the guilds were restrictive and repressive. Therefore, how can he achieve a convincing affirmation of the general Burckhardtian views he professes? Much of his material challenges any bland acceptance of Burckhardtian notions of the liberation of the individual from medieval ties of obligation. Surely, the corporate guild was not the best mechanism for economic self-expression. Without attempting to probe this question further, it can be suggested that Doren's resolution is not altogether satisfactory. He would argue that the gap between theory and practice was so great that the individual guildsman could easily evade the rigors of the law.

The conclusions advanced by N. Rodolico in his *Il popolo minuto* (*1343–1378*) (Bologna, 1899), as well as in his *La democrazia fiorentina nel suo tramonto* (*1378–1382*) (Bologna, 1906), are less relevant to the present inquiry since they treat internal political developments after the mid-*trecento.* The fact remains, however, that the author was the first to study the history of the lower orders of Florentine society. Also, his sensitive treatment of the relationship between politics and medieval religious nonconformity is extremely suggestive. His harsh and able critic, G. Scaramella, focused attention upon the role of the *novi cives* in communal politics over the second half of the *trecento.* But unlike Rodolico he identified this new element only with the *nouveaux riches* rather than with the

offspring of workers and minor guildsmen. This he did in his important monograph, *Firenze allo scoppio del tumulto dei Ciompi* (Pisa, 1914). Both scholars saw the years after 1343 as the locus for the blossoming, ripeness, and final decay of democratic forms and impulses within the Arno republic. Neither was much concerned with depicting the culture and politics of the preceding interval or with describing the intellectual milieu of the democratic years. Likewise, there was little concern to distinguish the newcomers after 1343 from their earlier counterparts. R. Caggese, in his *Firenze della decadenza di Roma al risorgimento d'Italia* (3 vols.; Florence, 1912–21), displayed an understanding of the several historical interpretations then in vogue, incorporating in eclectic fashion some of the central hypotheses of scholars from Davidsohn through Rodolico. F. Schevill's *History of Florence from the Founding of the City through the Renaissance* (New York, 1936) presents the best general synthesis in English of the many divergent interpretations. As G. Brucker has suggested in the bibliographical essay in his extremely important recent work, *Florentine Politics and Society, 1343–1378* (Princeton, 1962), both Caggese and Schevill tend to be overly influenced by Rodolico and therefore do not stress pre-1343 developments sufficiently.

Two noteworthy studies are P. Santini's *Studi sull'antica costituzione del Comune di Firenze* (Florence, 1901) and B. Barbadoro's *La finanza della repubblica fiorentina: Imposta diretta e debito publico fino all'istituzione del Monte* (Florence, 1929). Neither draws dramatic inferences from the materials. The former deals brilliantly with problems in late twelfth- and early thirteenth-century Florentine constitutional history. His approach is juridical, and his important delineation of issues has unfortunately not been amplified by subsequent inquiry. Barbadoro's work stands as the fundamental analysis of communal finance from the earliest documents through the formation of the funded communal debt at mid-*trecento*. My present study is deeply beholden to his compelling monograph. While Barbadoro is sometimes reluctant to generalize from his data, C. Paoli, in his *Della Signoria di Gualtieri Duca d'Atene in Firenze* (Florence, 1862), is not. He displays a moral aversion toward Brienne's tenure as an example of that form of signory which hampers the attempt of Florentines to respond to crisis by forming a more impersonal government.

It is only with the publication of the early writings of Nicola Ottokar and Armando Sapori that Florentine historiography takes a radical turn. Their scholarship has influenced contemporary interpretations in fields as varied as Dante studies, inquiries into art history, and investigations into the world of the *Decameron*. Beginning with his *Il Comune di Firenze alla fine del dugento* (Florence, 1926) and continuing through *Studi comunali e fiorentini* (Florence, 1948), Ottokar worked effectively to undermine generalizations on socioeconomic stratification that underlay the insights of Florentine historians from Davidsohn and Salvemini to Caggese. He deftly demonstrated the inadequacies of many of their conclusions but was not always able to furnish unifying hypotheses of his own. He denied any inexorable contest for political power between precisely determined socioeconomic groups, any systematic exploitation of rural wealth by the urban industrialists and bankers, and the exclusively aristocratic composition of the powerful Guelf party. Indeed, Ottokar found few striking differences between political sentiments of great magnates and those of high-born commoners as expressed during the many sessions of the governmental advisory councils. Skillfully, then, he discredited much that his hard-working predecessors had done by presenting a seemingly nonideological view of political behavior.

Ottokar's successor to the chair of history at the University of Florence justly lauds his incomparable writings.[3] And yet, says Sestan, his works reveal a tragic flaw of which the master himself was not unaware. On the one hand Ottokar recognizes that politicians of Dante's era were not blind to the possibilities of a just and peaceful civil life and the homage they paid to the ethos of the society through which they moved, though formal, was no less real. Moreover, he realizes that their world was replete with religious ritual and sacramental ties. Yet despite his tacit salute to the "associative impulse," Ottokar's political men act neither from economic interest nor cultural and ideological imperatives. In point of fact, concludes Sestan, Ottokar's men don't know where they are going or where they want to go. The reader feels only that he is witnessing a sterile struggle bereft of significance or development. What, in Sestan's opinion, is required is an effort to relate the "primordial instincts for political power," which are a historical constant, to the particulars of the moment, especially the need to justify one's acts to others as well as rationalize them to oneself.

The contribution of Ottokar remains formidable, even though in certain respects it is essentially negative. Sestan feels that his predecessor's writings fail to clarify the collective impulses to which Florentines of the age of Dante responded. Studies of art, literature, religious thought, and philosophy reveal that this was an epoch in which civic culture flourished. Such a renaissance of a polis had not occurred since the days of antique Greece and Rome. Sestan opines that Ottokar's inability to discern any ideals or even ideas underlying political behavior may have been due to the fact that he had selected too brief a period—just over a decade—for investigation. Possibly Ottokar was too concerned to criticize earlier scholarship. In any case, he did shatter those simplistic a priori notions about class conflict. No longer could historians rely on either a thesis-antithesis interpretation of the relationship between noble and commoner or between city and countryside.

It was the economic historian Armando Sapori who sought to depict the ideals and collective impulses that altered the goals and rationalizations of the Florentine merchant class in what he was to term "the heroic age of Florentine capitalism." "The Christian pilgrims"— the Acciaiuoli, Bardi, Frescobaldi, Peruzzi *et al.*, noble and commoner alike—responded to the religious and chivalric imperatives of the late Middle Ages. In a series of works, appropriately listed and discussed in his *Le marchand italien du moyen âge* (Paris, 1952), he considered the formal education and culture of the capitalist elite in Florence. Deftly he overturned Sombart's superficial analysis of the skills and sensitivities of this highly developed community of men who were called upon to finance far-flung enterprises and formulate intricate policies. Moreover, Sapori learned from Ottokar to avoid naive assertions concerning class or such simplistic formulas as irreducible antithesis between capitalist and agrarian society. Instead he presents the guild aristocrats with their diversified patrimonies and extensive rural holdings, manifesting both confidence and an abiding concern for Christian norms. Scholars of Italian literature, especially Vittore Branca in his *Boccaccio Medievale* (Florence, 1956), are particularly beholden to this economic historian who was the first to explore the values of late medieval society as they influenced the business and industrial orders in the Florentine polis.

There are two reservations concerning Sapori's numerous and valuable studies. He has a marked tendency to denigrate later *trecento* capitalism by comparison

[3] E. Sestan, "Nicola Ottokar," *ibid.*, LXXI (1959), 178–184.

with its earlier, heroic epoch. Such contrast is misleading especially since Sapori has done little work on the business community of the late *trecento*. Second, and more germane to the present study, he tends to utilize very superficial aspects of merchant life for the purpose of establishing the character of the business world. It is not that his inferences are incorrect but that the acts themselves are trivial. In other words, he does not attempt to describe the more serious and weighty elements in the religious psychology of the merchant world. Similarly, he indicates most inadequately the durable patriotic impulses of this class, making only bland statements about their abiding love for the *patria*. He makes no attempt to present an integrated view of the citizen merchant responding to the norms of everyday civic life. All this criticism pales, however, by comparison with the service he alone rendered by disproving facile class theories and naive economic determinist explanations. This he accomplished through an empathetic narrative of mercantile elitist sympathies for both the structure and the self-justifying values of the late medieval world.

One area still requiring analysis is that of style: the basic social and mental processes of which cultural institutions are the concrete manifestations or projections. Relationships among phenomena rather than the phenomena themselves must be studied. Crucial to this enterprise are the systems into which these relations are structured. Clearly, there is a need to relate the objective analysis of institutions to the subjective experience of individuals. History, then, concentrates upon organizing its data in accord with conscious expressions of social values.

From the foundation of *Année Sociologique* by Emile Durkheim to the writings of Claude Levi-Strauss—*Structural Anthropology* (New York, 1963)—the French have dominated in that critical area where the socioeconomic and the psychological tend to merge. The question of how practical everyday activity assumes the status of a program for living is an essential one for those treating problems of style. How is this instinctual activity embossed and embellished until it becomes a creed? In what manner do the designs and actions of men conform to an ideal system? One of Ottokar's most able students, J. Plesner, in his *L'émigration de la campagne à la ville libre de Florence au XIII^e siècle* (Copenhagen, 1934), commenced a reconstruction of the history of relationships between city and countryside in late medieval Tuscany that presented a more integrated view of economic life and attendant values. With Plesner as with Sapori the concern was not conflict and exploitation but shared values and aspirations. It was the latter that lent style to the age and *Stand* to the individual. Urban life did not preclude traditional rural values any more than merchant activity gainsaid Christian imperatives.

Since Plesner's premature death, Italian historians from E. Fiumi to E. Conti have continued to subscribe to modes of inquiry already initiated by Ottokar, Sapori, and Plesner. Fiumi in his numerous publications, principally in the *Archivio Storico Italiano* from 1950 through 1959, and Conti in his series, not yet published in its entirety, appear to be conducting an analysis wherein systems of property and techniques of cultivation or production are considered as prime determinants of other "social facts." In turn, these social facts are regarded as psychological facts. While neither of these authors employs such constructs with any high order of self-consciousness, it would appear that they, like so many other contemporary historians, owe a sizable debt to the explicit methodology of the French school, from Marc Bloch—*Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale*

*française* (Paris, 1952)—to Georges Duby—*L'économie rurale et la vie des campagnes dans l'Occident médiéval* (2 vols.; Paris, 1962). From these last we discover that men's ideas are embedded in the *ambiance sociale* and that a system of social classification comes into being "only by virtue of the ideas that men form of it." The search, then, is for enduring sets of social and cultural conditions. Primary for Bloch are the *liens de dépendance* which bind one man to another. Both historians shun the quest for the single cause or the unique in any guise and seek to describe the more pervasive substratum of socioeconomic life. Further, the intense search for origins or precursors has since diminished: the approach today once more emphasizes the study of structure and function.

In the work of Plesner there is a high order of insight in the Durkheim tradition, so expertly practiced by Marc Bloch. Perhaps this Dane intuited much that was to follow, for his studies revealed the inadequacy of prevailing interpretations based on "ties of obligation" among rural inhabitants. By close phenomenological inquiry he was also able to show the shortcomings of standard theories of immigration into the Florentine republic in the *dugento*. Finally, he demonstrated how critical rural political experience was for the Florentine immigrant and how strong the bonds between city and countryside. Recently, P. J. Jones in his "Florentine Families and Florentine Diaries in the Fourteenth Century," *Papers of the British School at Rome,* XXIV (1956), 183–205, has persuasively amplified the nexus between the emerging value system and the intimate interdependence between polis and countryside. The style of life most devoutly sought represented a graceful synthesis between rustic virtue and business probity.

Nicolai Rubinstein, also a student of Ottokar's, accepted the socioeconomic frame of a symbiotic relationship between city and *contado*. Likewise he rejected simplistic notions of causality predicated upon theories of class conflict. Instead he undertook the first systematic treatment of emerging Florentine historical consciousness in the later Middle Ages. Through the most fastidious reconstructions he was able to bring to the fore that loosely structured political theory that guided the rulers of Florence in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. In his "The Beginnings of Political Thought in Florence," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* V (1942), 198 *ff.*, he demonstrates that the start of political thought is always closely related to the awakening of interest in history. Previously scholars had neglected the political ideas of Italian city-states and concentrated upon theoretical writings on church or empire or the general nature of the state. Rubinstein traces the earliest indications of political ideology through a description of the first Florentine specimens of historical narrative. He also indicates how susceptible late medieval Florentine historiography was to the imperatives of a burgeoning imperialism. In his "Florence and the Despots," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society,* 5th series, II (1952), 21–45, he reveals the extent to which *trecento* Arno political thought was influenced by everyday civic experiences. The citizen aversion for despotism, so characteristic of the polis, stemmed from confrontations with this exacting variety of rule.

Rubinstein's work on the emergence of communal art is also of prime significance. He seeks for correlations between the burgeoning claims of society and the profusion of didactic frescoes adorning the walls of new government buildings. Moreover, he discloses a close relationship between certain of these wall paintings and popularized political theory of the late Middle Ages. [See his "Political Ideas in Sienese Art," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes,* XXI (1958), 179–207.] The art historian Millard Meiss has been most intent upon presenting

a stylistic analysis of cultural developments in *trecento* Florence in the fields of painting, literature, and religious thought. Although the first is paramount for the author, his excursions into the others are always most illuminating. Moreover, his approach raises large-scale questions pertaining to the changing character of the Florentine artistic and intellectual milieu over the course of the fourteenth century. My inquiry into the documents of the pre-1348 era owes much to him. His understanding of stylistic problems leads him to characterize this age as one of "harmonious coordination," at least in the realm of painting. With the onset of the Black Death, this confident balance gave way to an "opposition between plane and space, and between line and mass." Painting after the mid-*trecento* expresses a "denial of the values of individuality," tending "to magnify the realm of the divine while reducing that of the human." Gone is the faith that sacred and profane can be successfully blended. The liturgical and the miraculous are now stressed at the expense of the "naturalistic" and "lyrical." Departed, too, is the intense participation in the realization of chivalric virtue and knightly elegance.

If any modest disclaimer can be entered against Meiss's interpretation, it is that he has overstressed the effect of the Black Death upon Florentine culture. Indeed, it would seem the hard-won "harmonious coordination" was beginning to disintegrate at least by the early 1340's. The dissipation of the energies of the movement he describes as "proto-humanism" appear more closely connected with the declining vitality of the communal patriciate—magnate and haute bourgeois alike.

A work of great relevance that can be examined with rare profit in conjunction with Meiss's writings is the justly celebrated *Boccaccio Medievale* (Florence, 1956) by Vittore Branca. This volume of literary history argues with cogency that the *Decameron,* while composed at mid-*trecento,* looks back to a cultural scene whose moral locus is the first decades of the fourteenth century. Further, Branca discloses that the earliest readers of the *Decameron* were the progeny of the early fourteenth-century patriciate from the circle of the magnate Cavalcanti and the haute bourgeoisie Acciaiuoli clans. Adding to the persuasive materials utilized by economic historians such as Sapori, Branca demonstrates Boccaccio's unstinting admiration and persistent sympathy for the merchant orders of Florentine society. Although these good burghers were not crowned and adorned with the finery of the chivalric cadre, yet they were rich in humanity and generosity. It was these Florentine merchants, the "veri conquistadores," who for Boccaccio were able both to teach and to learn from the knightly stratum. The career and writings of the youthful Boccaccio stand as a eulogy to this hopeful ideal. According to Branca the *Decameron* is grounded in the optimistic medieval ethos—which explains the role of the comic schema in structuring the narrative.

The moral itinerary of the *Decameron* progresses from a beginning "horribilis et fetidus" to an end "prosperus desiderabilis et gratus." The young Boccaccio subscribed with elegant brevity to the Thomistic and Dantesque conception of *Fortuna,* who is not the blind distributor of good and evil but rather the emissary of divine justice and providence. But these hopeful commitments and abstract schemes recede, and we are left with an obtrusive sense of everyday realities that conform to no moral schema or comic pattern. If the *Decameron* stands as a most esthetic domicile for the meeting of symbol and chronicle, episode and legend, it also marks the commencement of the devitalized heroic paradigm and faltering moral architecture. The dissolution of organizing metaphors is a signifi-

cant area for investigation by scholars concerned with cultural developments in Florence, particularly in the 1360's and 1370's. While there is evidence of dissolution in earlier decades, it does not become a leitmotiv of the arts until just after the mid-*trecento*. One can see its onset and development in the paintings of Taddeo Gaddi, whose life span encompasses both the earlier and later periods and who gradually abandoned Giotto's synthesis. Still very useful in this regard is R. Salvini's *L'arte di Agnolo Gaddi* (Florence, 1936).

Last in our bibliographical note but exceedingly rewarding are the many writings of the recently deceased German scholar, Erich Auerbach. [For extensive bibliography and an excellent discussion of secondary studies on Dante, see C. Davis, *Dante and the Idea of Rome* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 195–282.] Auerbach's historical eye is rivalled by few literary historians, and while Dante remains in the foreground of his inquiries, his interpretations serve to illuminate the general north Italian scene during the declining Middle Ages. Like Branca, he seeks to delineate those ideal schema and moral designs that structure the most attractive literature of those times. For him, Dante is a tragic figure who subscribed generously and totally to the transcendental values of the decaying age. However, Dante is too conscientious a historian and too skilled an observer of men to believe that these values can actually obtain in the phenomenal world. Indeed, the poet witnesses only failing institutions and decadent spiritual forms. The transcendent ideals of the medieval world can no longer conceal the cluttered, disjointed political landscape; finally, man's earthly struggles occur on "this little threshing place." In his *Dante: Poet of the Secular World,* trans. R. Manheim (Chicago, 1961), Auerbach demonstrates that the artist cannot conceive of a mystical system outside of and unrelated to the realities of the historical process. Our spiritual destiny can only be understood in terms of our historical being.

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